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JUNE 1982

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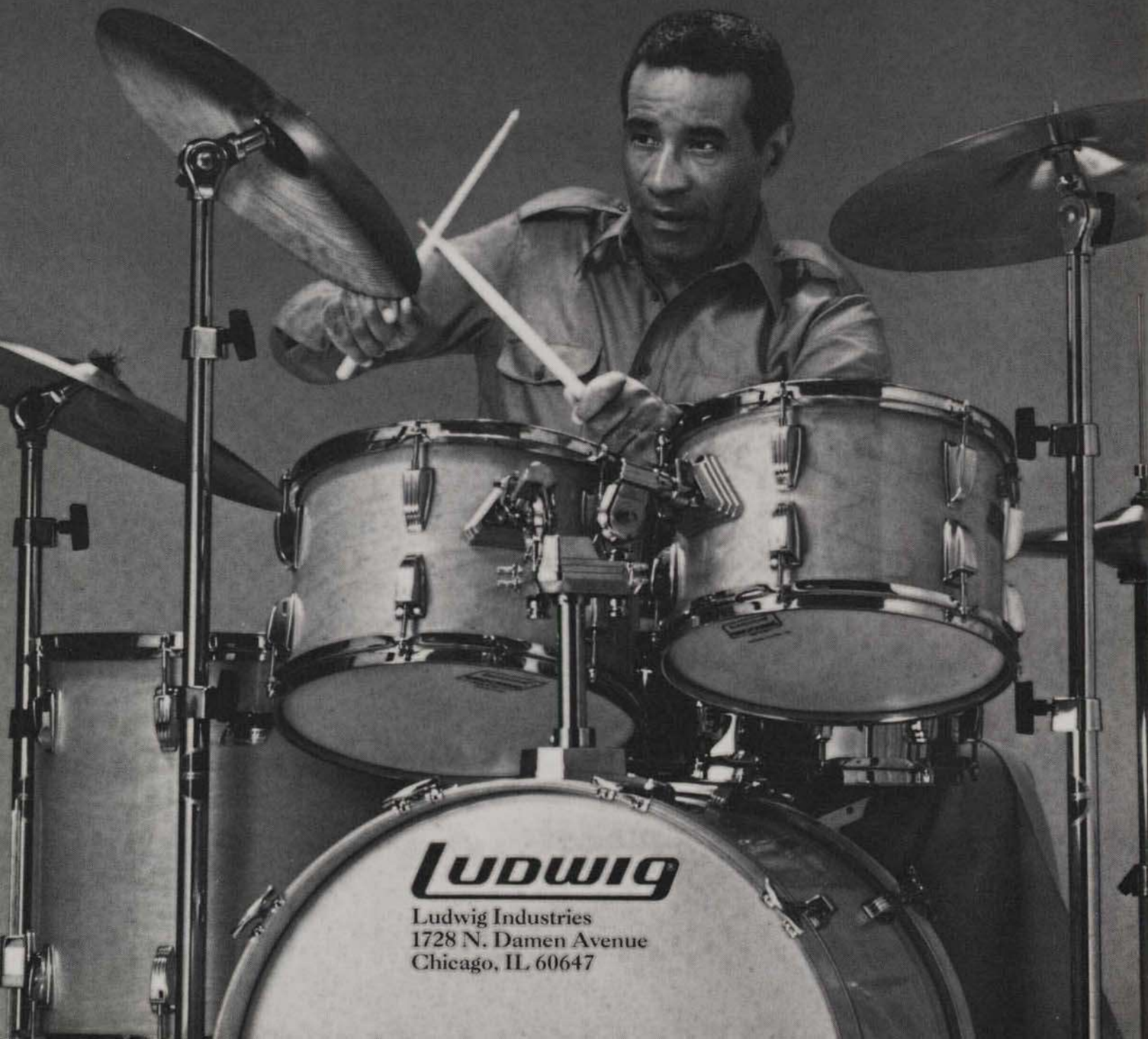

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Cover Photo by Kathy Sloane

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It would be hard to name another drummer who has earned as much respect as Max Roach—respect that has come from fellow musicians, critics, writers and, of course, his many listeners. As eloquent as he is versatile, Roach speaks candidly about his activities, beliefs and philosophies.
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KEITH MOON

When Keith Moon died, rock lost one of its most famous—and perhaps infamous—performers. In many ways, Moon was the consumate rock musician, merging his flamboyant personality with his creative abilities as a drummer to create an exciting, and very unique, style of modern rock drumming.
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Although some musicians might get stale after over thirty years on the same gig, not so Vic Firth, who has a genuine enthusiasm about his many activities, ranging from his playing with the Boston Symphony to his successful stick business. Always open-minded, Firth offers an interesting, and often surprising, overview of the many similarities between different styles of music.
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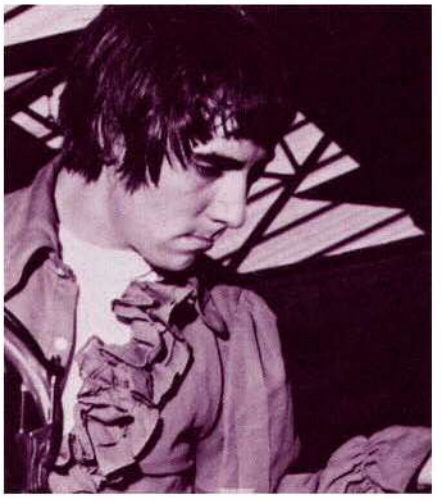

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EDITOR'S OVERVIEW

Each year around this time, I receive a handful of letters from some disgruntled individuals who take exception to the MD Readers Poll, and the whole concept of music polls in general. The point is valid.

One does wonder how it all began: the *Metronome* Poll, the *downheat* Poll, *Guitar Player, Contemporary Keyboard,* and of course, the infamous *Playboy* Jazz Poll, known to have All-Star Bands with Al Hirt and Pete Fountain sitting alongside Miles and Bird.

Seriously, with such a wealth of talent on the music scene, is it really possible, or necessary, to single out one musician as being *better* than another? I doubt it. So what's the purpose of all these polls'? I'd like to think the MD Poll is somewhat different, primarily by the nature in which we approach the results.

This year, MD made a statement on the ballot in February. Our poll would honor drummers in all fields, who've been active during the past year, and who have been inspirational to us all. In no way do we mean to suggest that an individual is the *best* drummer in his category, simply because he has won the poll. We'd much prefer to say that the winners won on the basis of first-class musicianship, outstanding musical achievement, and the inspiration they gave the majority of drummers in 1981. We think this is a much more sensible way to approach it. If we must have polls, then let's regard them as simply a formal means of saying thank you to a group of talented artists for their accomplishments, and the inspiration we received as a result of those accomplishments. No more, no less. My congratulations to all.

June leads off with MD's second visit with Max Roach; the first was back in early '79. Maintaining an active career which has spanned four decades, Max is recognized by many as the single most important player in the entire history of jazz drumming.

And Keith Moon fans will delight in T. Bruce Wittet's stirring portrait, capturing the lifestyle, the music, the essence of the man himself. *Keith Moon: Remembered* is a fitting tribute to MD's most recent Hall of Fame Award recipient.

Rounding out the interview segment are Joe Vitale of Eagles fame, and tympanist Vie Firth, certainly the most open-minded percussionist in all of symphonic music.

We've also launched the first of our special four-part series on *The History ofRock Drumming.* MD's Scott K. Fish has researched and written what may be the most comprehensive report on rock drumming ever compiled for a magazine. You'll want to follow this one from beginning to end.

And if you've ever thought about opening your own drum shop, Rupert Walden's survey of four major shop owners may supply the needed insight.

Among the high points of June's column departments: time vs. feel players, removing your plastic covering, rudimental exercises and fusion beats. Cheech Iero spent a day with Chris Parker for his absorbing *Day In The Life OfA Studio Drummer;* Mickey Curry talks about life with Hall and Oates, and Jimmy Morton brings us *Rock Charts,* a new pop tune transcription feature which we hope you'll put to good use.

RS

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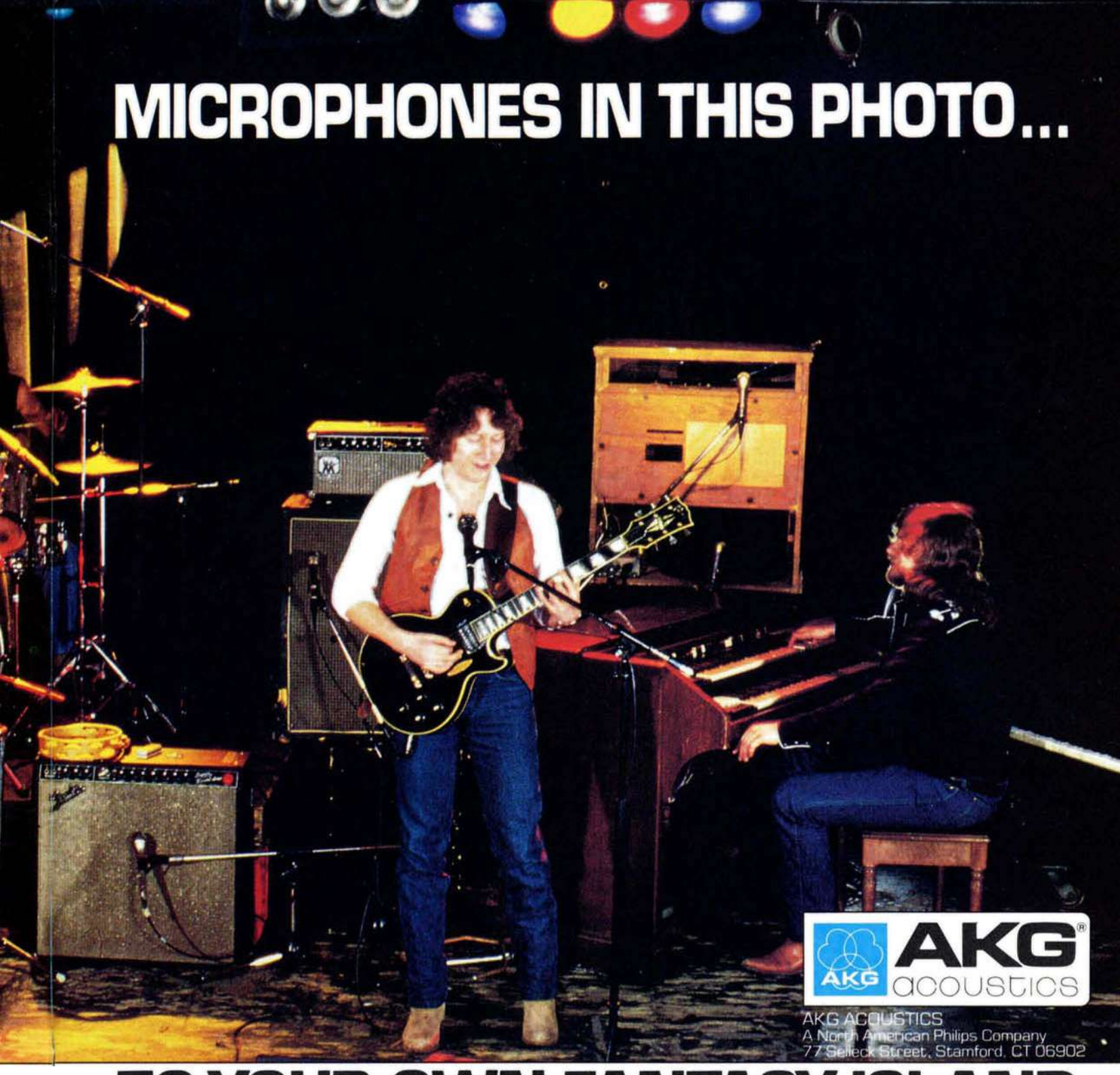

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Look for the new Uncle Chick Band recording of "Moments" on the Pequot Records Ltd. Label.

READER'S PLATFORM

Your interviews with professional drummers are a fantastic feature. I never fail to benefit from the knowledge passed on by these greats. There is one drummer I feel you've overlooked: Nick Mason. He's been playing with Pink Floyd for the last thirteen years. Not only is Mason a unique and talented drummer, he has engineered and produced the last several Floyd albums. It's rare to find a drummer who's in control of his own sound from both sides of the mixing desk. I'm sure MD readers who are preparing to enter the studio could benefit from Mason's experience.

JIM DEROGATIS
JERSEY CITY. NEW JERSEY

I have been amazed at how well your magazine is put together. You are reaching such a vertical audience, yet it must be terribly loyal. And, if you want to sell a product or service to drummers, Modern Drummer is just about the only game in town. You've done a good job of balancing the jazz drummers with the rock guys, giving me, a forty-one-year-old with roots firmly in traditional and mainstream jazz, a better appreciation of some of the good, young rock drummers. You're doing a good job.

JACK S. ALLDAY
DALLAS, TEXAS

I'd like to read some interviews with Yogi Horton, Steve Jordan. Steve Gadd, Al Foster (ask him about hi-hat technique with the foot. He's amazing.), Philip Glass, William Kraft, and some articles on Balanese and Javan music. What is that 5/4 stuff all about anyway? Also, how about an interpretation of reggae music, and a look at the music scene in Australia—especially in the studios.

NIGEL BLADEN
COSTA MESA, CALIFORNIA

MD has really helped my drumming immensely. Rick Van Horn's articles are great. He really knows what he's talking about. I loved the interview with Peter Criss. He was my first real drumming influence. I really liked your articles on Steve Smith, Gil Moore, John Bonham, Neil Peart, and Mitch Mitchell. All five of them have been big influences on me. I'd like to see articles on Frank Beard of ZZ Top, Roger Taylor of Queen, and Neal Smith (formerly of Alice Cooper). I think your mag's the best. Thanks.

TIM D1EHM
LINCOLN, NEBRASKA

Thanks so much for your article on Ringo Starr. I fell in love with this man when I was twelve years old, and decided that I wanted to be a drummer also. Today, eighteen years later, I am even more impressed with this very creative drummer. Very few drummers can bring a song to life the way Ringo can. Please print more on Ringo in the future.

DONNA DAVIS
FREDERICK, MARYLAND

I'd like to thank you for a truly great magazine! It's proven to be both educational and entertaining. How about articles on Buddy Williams. Jeff Porcaro, and Dennis Bradford? Thanks again for a truly excellent magazine.

SHAWN MAHAN
WICHITA, KANSAS

I'd like to express my thanks for your outrageously superb magazine. The contents of every issue are priceless, and the artwork on the covers is especially nice. Good work, David Creamer! Also, I'm sure there must be a few thousand drummers out there who would be interested in an interview with Curt Cress, the original drummer with Passport. Where is he now and who is he playing with?

PARK PATHIAS
FREMONT, CALIFORNIA

I cannot thank you enough for revitalizing my interest in the art of drumming. I've been performing eight years in the rock, country/rock field. Being a vocalist as well, I found that my drumming had suffered. I was dissatisfied with myself, my playing—but this all came to an end when I picked up the November MD at a local music store, and read it cover to cover. Never have I been so enthused and fired up about playing! It was as if the magazine was talking directly to me. Many, many thanks.

STEPHEN BOULLEMET
ANNISTON. ALABAMA

I just want to tell you that you guys are great, and MD is the meanest magazine in publication. Every drummer should respect your staff for what you've done for the drumming world today. I hope to be in MD someday, and I hope you would consider it. Keep all the great work coming. I hope to meet you and everyone at MD someday. For now, take care and good luck.

EDDIE DELGAUDIO
STATEN ISLAND, NEW YORK

As a young drummer, I've been exposed to many types of music. Most of it is popular, but not in the U.S. You're an international magazine and you've done interviews with popular U.S. bands, but not U.K. bands. Please let us hear from Cozy Powell (MSG), Phil Taylor (Motorhead), and Clive Burr (Iron Maiden). All three are very popular in Europe and each have their own unique styles.

SCOTT MACDONALD
ARLINGTON, VIRGINIA

I've been a professional jazz drummer for twenty-two years, and moved to Germany over three years ago. I just got my first issue of MD from a student, yesterday. From living here and traveling, I've missed this great magazine for a long time. My loss.

I'm presently leaving on tour with Dollar Brand, and have a new album of my own called *European Childbirth* on Sweet Dragon Records (Copenhagen) coming out in February. Also, I'm teaching drums at two universities over here in Germany.

I look forward to having your fine magazine soon.

ABBEY RADER
WEST GERMANY

I would like to see an article on drums applied to Latin, Salsa, and the folk music of Puerto Rico.

ALBERT JULIAN GARCIA
(FANIA ALL-STARS)
SANTURCE, PUERTO RICO

Thanks for publishing such a spotlight magazine for the drummer. It has not only helped me better my drumming, but my whole way of interpreting the art. There's more to it than banging out on the two and four. Thanks again.

JAY COUSIN
LIMA, OHIO

I am tired of hearing about all those new rock drummers who cannot read music and are uneducated. In my opinion, a good player is a person who has put years of practice time in developing reading, technique, and is an experienced player. Not a performer who plays a twenty-piece drum set and puts on a good show.

GARY TAZZARA
TORRINGTON, CT

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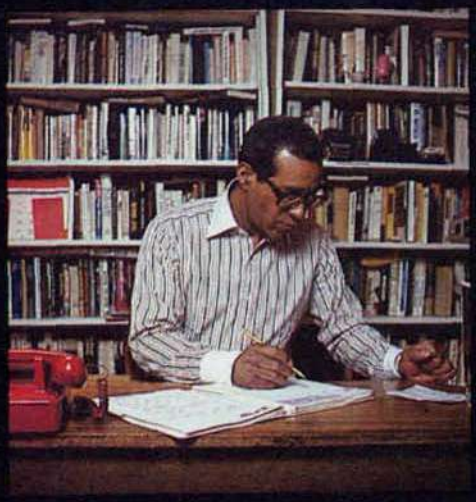

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MAX ROACH

By Scott K. Fish

Max Roach is a vital link in the chain of drum history. He was recognised as the *man who pioneered a modern drumming style for his work with bebop giants like Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie.*

In the Fifties and Sixties, Max led a number of different bands that were incredible. The arrangements were often innovative (for instance, Max was the first drummer to have the bass player accompany the drum solo, so that the listener could hear the changes of the song as if he were listening to a horn player) and his early work with voices and percussion at that time was always searching and mostly brilliant.

Then Max disappeared from "the scene" and concentrated on teaching at The University of Massachusetts in Amherst, Massachusetts. When he finally came back on the scene he was better than ever, and in addition to his fine quartet, Max organized M'Boom, a percussion ensemble of multi-talented percussionists who were all excellent jazz musicians. M'Boom brought a whole new look to the percussion ensemble and continues to do so.

SF: I was listening to your album *Chattahoochee Red.* I wanted to ask about "The Dream." The significance of that song and the importance of a dream to human beings.

MR: Actually, that was a duet with voice. I think it grows out of some of the things I'm interested in besides playing with bands and with other instruments. I'm also interested in doing "mixed" or multimedia things: using a drummer in contexts other than just drums. Of course. Martin Luther King's voice is, perhaps, one of the most musical voices that there is: the way he phrases, timbre, style: plus he has a message that is *celebrative.* So, I picked that particular piece to do in two parts with a drum solo. A talking, *speaking* voice and a drum solo which is very musical. As you say, everybody does have a dream. Of course. Martin Luther King's dream is a dream deferred in a sense.

You're also recycling materials. I've worked on pieces where I've used recorded speeches, new speeches, a chorus of people who talk in a montage with a percussion ensemble. It's a great effect. Of course, these things aren't for the commercial market. They're mostly theatrical. So, I'm interested in those areas of performance and I know "The Dream" grows out of those kinds of experiences.

SF: I saw you perform

Photo by Tom Copi

in 1974, I think, at The Jazz Showcase in Chicago. You stepped up to the microphone and said something that struck me as very profound. You mentioned the names of many of the great people you've been associated with, and you said, "The thing that made these people great was that they were able to make their presence felt among people, without being oppressive. Beyond that they all had *one original idea* that you could hear every time they played."

MR: They had something of their own.

SF: If I remember right, you said that we were all looking for that one original idea in our own lives.

MR: Right. Trying to find our own musical character. You know, you're always striving to reach out and find new ways to do things. I'm forever trying to do something else with whatever I've already been involved in. Sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But, at least you keep on trying because if you get caught up in formulas that you know will work, sometimes it can stunt your creativity. I mean, we all are trying to be *creative,* so to speak. If you know that certain things will work or certain arrangements will work, this musical attitude will work, you can stay with that for a moment. But you're *cheating* the creative aspect of your work if you just rely on that, and you never try to do anything else. I have a great deal of respect for artists who take chances.

SF: Like your duets with Anthony Braxton?

MR: Yeah. The duets came out of that kind of concept. I'm not the only one who does it! I think that Miles does it. Some groups kind of stay in the same format. M'Boom is reaching out. It's an attitude of taking a group of percussionists—jazz players in particular—and involving them in the total percussion concept to see what you come up with!

Now we know that it can be done. We know we can take a group of percussionists who are sensitive enough to listen to each other very carefully, and improvise and deal with everything, although our music is annotated as well as improvisational. It has both elements in it. We set up something with written sections and then we let the imagination of the players relate to what has been written: the mood, the timbre, and the ambiance of the written parts. And it took us time to work it out.

You have to work with the people for a while. I was talking to Jo Jones one day. He commented something like, "It's very important how a person develops his own musical personality." He says, "First, you have to be in a situation for a few years, the same musical setting, so that you can develop your character. Much the same as an actor in a play. If somebody gives you a script and you take a character and develop it, that character becomes you with the way *you* deal with that character." Well, Jo Jones was explaining why today there might not be as much individuality among players as there was when he was coming up. You could always tell, "Oh, that's Sidney Catlett, " or "That's Krupa." or "That's Jo Jones," or "This is O'Neil Spencer." You could hear it right away and know that's *this* person. Well, Jo said these people had an opportunity to work in one situation for a time so they could develop their own musical character within that situation. When they left there, then they had established their musical character so when they played the first few notes, you *knew* who it was. Some of the people today can do that because of developing that way. I notice most of the people who have an *easily* identifiable musical character are those who are with steady groups and they travel around.

You have to be there to play every night and deal with your instrument, and with yourself in a situation that allows you a chance to experiment and add and discard, and add and discard, until finally you come up with something.

SF: As far back as I can remember from listening to your records, you've always had an identifiable sound. Can you remember a time when someone might have listened to you and not known it was Max Roach?

MR: Well, there must've been a time. I'll tell you something that *has* happened. In high school the people I grew up with—like Cecil Payne—we all strived to find our own kind of identity. We were aware of that because the "old-timers" would *tell* us when we got a chance to go to the theaters and hang out backstage and listen. They would always make sure that you knew that the only way you were going to get over, *really* get over, was to find your own musical personality. Everybody knew who Coleman Hawkins was and what he sounded like. Everyone knew how Chick Webb dealt with things. Today, we have all kinds of techniques which go along with what's happening today. *If you* get a hit record, it's beholding upon me to piggyback the record that you have and vice versa. That's part of this business. But, I do believe that the artists who have really taken the time to develop their craft and pursue the part of themselves that stands out in any situation, and that pursues their musical personality. I think they seem to last longer. They may not get rich overnight, but they last longer. Sometimes they *do* get rich overnight!

SF: Is it difficult, economically, to try to make money with a band on the road today than it was in the '40s and '50s?

MR: I think it depends on who the artists are and how much money they can demand. It's complex today. If you have a record out, is the record being promoted or pushed? Then trying to stay above the high cost of transportation and all of the other things that keep a group on the road.

SF: In the '50s, in the band with Clifford Brown, if you wanted to take that band on the road what was involved?

MR: The overhead wasn't that great. We traveled by car. We had two cars for the five of us. We had no problems. We didn't make a *lot* of money but we took care of our bills and took care of our families.

SF: Do you consider it important for musicians to be aware of the business aspects of music?

MR: I think it's important to be *aware* of it. I think the musician should know what it's about so that he can check and cross-check his agents and managers so he won't be taken advantage of. But. I think professional negotiators and folks like that should be involved in handling a person's business. A musician should have accountants and negotiators and legal expertise. These are *essential* with today's business.

But, when we teach up there at U. Mass or I get to advise a student, I tell him to concentrate on the art. Concentrate on developing technique in every aspect. I'm a firm believer that every drummer should also perform on a melodic instrument—mallet instrument preferably, and, of course, keyboard

"I NEVER THINK ABOUT STICKING. I JUST HEAR THE SOUND. I HEAR A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SOUND IN A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF SPACE, AND HOW YOU DO THAT IN THAT SPACE DOESN'T NECESSARILY DEPEND ON THE STICKING."

Vintage shot of Roach

harmony on piano. I teach theory at the school. That was *my* major in school; not percussion. So, when I get a student who plays a melodic instrument, I insist that they learn how to keep time on drums. If I have the reed section I insist that they have a jam session amongst themselves and create their own rhythm section out of the reed section. The drummers should do the same kind of thing. They should have the melodic and harmonic properties available to themselves and learn these properties. It all helps, even though their major is percussion. So, that when you sit down you're not just sitting in there as a percussionist and that's all you're aware of. You're aware of everything that's going on around you. I find, especially working with M'Boom, that today some of the most interesting and original compositional concepts are coming from percussion players. I listen to some of Tony William's work. I listen to some of the things Billy Cobham does. It's interesting and it's another concept. So, I encourage students who are drummers and percussion players to do more writing as well. That's another thing.

I think that musicians who play instruments of *determinate* pitch can play an instrument of *indeterminate* pitch and vice versa. That *completes* the musician. It makes the musician a complete person, musically speaking.

SF: Piano was your first instrument wasn't it?

MR: Yes. I play the whole percussion family. But, it all comes out of knowing something about keyboard harmony, which *isn't* demanding. Knowing *theoretically* what music is about. How to create melodies, harmonies and what harmony and progressions are. All that information fits the whole indeterminate-pitch family.

SF: What size drums are you playing now?

MR: I'm playing a 22" bass drum, 12" and 13" mounted toms, a 16" floor tom, and a 14" which is a tunable floor tom.

SF: Back in the '50s and '60s jazz drummers were primarily using the smaller size drums: 18" bass, 12" mounted tom and 14" floor tom. I've heard that one of the main reasons drummers used that size drum was because they were easier to transport than larger drums.

MR: Exactly. It made it easier to get from town to town. Pack up your gear, put it in your car, and off you go. That was one of the *main* reasons I think. Plus, the bass drum had begun to become less and less an integral part of the whole musical set-up. It's different now. The bass drum, at that time, would stamp out what was happening with the acoustic bass. Even the pianists would leave that part. They would voice their chords so the bottom of the piano would be in thirds and sevenths instead of tonics and fifths. They left that part for the acoustic bass. So, your bass drum would only be used for accents and supports. So the small drum was great, plus, you didn't have all the electronics around you, so you didn't need that power there. There were many reasons for it. But, today you *do* need that power with the electronic scene.

SF: Did you and people like Art Blakey and Philly Joe Jones ever get together and toss around ideas?

MR: Oh yes. By listening to other people you can learn what to do and what not to do.

SF: Were the older drummers receptive to you as a young guy? Could you go up to Baby Dodds or Jo Jones and say, "Hey, what is that you're doing?" Or would they say "Get lost kid"?

MR: They would have to come to you. I wouldn't dare approach them. You'd learn from them by watching and listening to records and watching and listening to them whenever they'd come to town. It's not so much asking them "how" they did it, as to the fact that they could do something creative. You don't necessarily want to do *what* they did but you want to be as creative as they are. That's what it is. So. you may ask, "Well, how do you do such and such a thing?" They'll never show you *haw* to do it. But, you *saw* it and figured out your way of dealing with it so you can preserve your own individuality, contrary to saying, "Okay, you must hold the stick like *this.* You must do *this* with the right hand and left hand." *No.* Then that would make you a slave to someone else's technique.

I had an interesting experience. I went to Haiti and saw a great, great drummer there. I watched him teach a student and it was very close to the way we learned. We used to listen to records and take off the record what the person was doing. You didn't *see* the person. You'd just *hear* it. We'd figure out what was happening with our ears. Then we'd duplicate the sound. Well, *he* taught that way. He'd put a student in another room with a partition. Then he'd make a sound on the drum and the student would have to imitate the sound. When I asked him why he taught like that and why he would never have the student look at how he did things, he said it was because everybody's anatomy is different. So, it's beholding upon the student to *listen* and then figure out a way to create that sound.

SF: Do you think it's a bad approach for a kid to learn from a book that might have a Steve Gadd drum part written out with the sticking?

MR: It's always been like that, even with the old books. They always put stickings in. But. I know what you mean. What would happen when we'd learn the stickings, sometimes I would play something that *sounded* like what I heard on a record. I'd create my own stickings and

it would be totally different when I'd go to a theater and see Jo Jones do it. I'd say, "Wow, he does it completely different." But, the *sound was,* there. I had the sound. Getting that involved with sticking makes you lazier. You can create the same sound so many different ways as far as sticking is concerned.

I never think about sticking. I just hear the sound. I hear a certain amount of sound in a certain amount of space and how you create the sound in that space doesn't necessarily depend on the sticking. I'd be interested to slow it all down and say, "Aha, *that's* what my sticking was." But, basically it's singles and doubles, unless you're going to switch over sometimes.

SF: How did you learn how to tune your drums?

MR: Well, basic tuning for me is, if a drum is large and has got space, I figure it should be lower than another drum. I don't tune for a particular pitch like thirds and fifths. But, I do tune for a "live" sound. Today's tuning is not like that. Today's tuning is for a flat sound. Mine is a "live" sound. Each drum has its own character. There's high and various shades of medium down to the lowest or largest drum. Then it depends on what you want to do and how you want the instrument to sound. I think that the freedom drummers enjoy because they don't have to adhere to intervals means that you're constantly being surprised. You may come in one night and the weather has gotten everything soggy. You listen to that, and if you play with the same attitude, it almost fits the atmosphere. We're not slaves to A 440 or to keys. So, we have the kind of freedom that is a privilege.

SF: It must have been nuts with calf heads.

MR: I loved calf heads because sometimes if the weather was damp there was a certain mood that everybody's psyche was in because of the weather, and it goes along with that.

SF: The mood would be reflected in the drums'?

MR: Right. And it would fit.

SF: How would it affect you if you were used to a tight drum and you came around on a roll and the response was mush?

MR: That's something different. You don't let that upset you. You just go along with it.

SF: When you were a kid and you got your first set of drums, who was the first person to teach you how to tune them?

MR: Well, at that time the snare always sounded crisp and the tom-toms always rang. That flat sound wasn't there. It was always a ringing sound. Then you had to be careful, too. If the sound is too flat, it doesn't carry unless you're really miked. That's another thing. Everything was acoustic then and your drum had to have a live sound to carry. There weren't that many microphones. And different people would tell you that a snare drum has to *sound* like a snare drum, which was *tight.* And your side drums and tom-toms had to sound like that. They had to give you another character and also another color. So, *you* worked that out. But, the main thing was that you want it to project. You tuned it so that your large tom-tom was deeper than your small tom-tom but it still had to project. So everything was tuned up. Recording a percussion instrument, at that time the techniques were nowhere near like they are today. You can have a flat sound, just a "blah" sound, and it'll record beautifully with today's techniques. It would get lost at that time, so you had to tune accordingly. There was a certain tuning you used for recording and a certain tuning you used for live performances. You kind of picked it up and learned yourself. You would *hear* it. You'd go into a studio and when the drum was played back, if it didn't sound the way it sounded to you in the studio, then you'd try different things. When it was played back and you heard the sound you wanted, then that was the way you tuned your instrument.

Or, you'd go to hear somebody and *this* was the way you'd learn tuning. It's the way I learned it. I'd go hear somebody and I'd say, "Oh, that drum sounds too hard," so I would tune mine down. Or it sounds too flat so I'd tune mine up. I didn't want to sound like that. Maybe this person didn't take time to tune his bass drum and his bass drum just died, and when you'd go to look at his bass drum it was too loose and you understood. So, you learn tuning from listening to others and listening to yourself by way of recordings. With today's techniques you can hear your kit in any kind of situation.

SF: M'Boom has been around about ten years hasn't it?

MR: Yeah. Sometimes we'd lay out of it for two years or something like that because I went up to U. Mass, to do some teaching. Whenever someone would come up with a job is when we'd get together. But, we've been around about ten years.

SF: How long was the preparation for the first M'Boom album?

MR: We gave ourselves about a year, but we were in the studio only three days. But, when I say a year it wasn't constant. If I was in town and everybody was available we'd get together. Finally, everybody would bring in material and we had more than enough material. It broke itself down into using, I think eight pieces on the LP.

SF: Did CBS think you were crazy when you came in with the idea?

MR: First of all they said. "Eight drummers?" I think they may have suspected we were going to have eight drumsets in there. But no, it was only two sets of drums and so forth.

SF: I wanted to ask you about a quote of yours from the back of the Gene Norman album. "Listening and talking to the symphony cats gave me a great sense of the dignity of the art and inspired me to strive for high standards. I guess there's no substitute for perfection."

MR: That quote was made some years ago. However, since that time I've changed quite a bit. I find that the so called "classical" musicians that I'm impressed with are composers and soloists. Certain composers; certainly the masters all the way up to now. I particularly like people like Puccini, Bach, Beethoven on up to Stockhausen.

As far as working in a large orchestra is concerned, that's something I don't believe I ever could do because it all seems so boring to me to have to play the same material that someone else is responsible for over and over again. I think this music that we call "jazz," this area of American music, *freed* musicians. Now a musician who deals in this music can create and perform his own creativity spontaneously. That's what this music has done for *musicians* totally. If you have to sit in an orchestra and play parts of someone else's ideas, I think that's very democratic, and it's a new way of doing things in a sense, and it's highly disciplined because everybody has to be on the same plane technically as far as the music is concerned. Everybody has to be aware of what the tempo or the rhythms are, the keys, and the harmonic progressions, and also the implications involved in the melody.

SF: Let me ask you this: If you could establish The Max Roach School of Music, how would you run it? What areas of music would you stress for a kid that wanted to concentrate on the creative area of percussion?

MR: I think the main thing about education, for me, is that a person is supposed to go into an institution, or go to a teacher, and they should come away with the equipment that would help them to survive out here, doing what you have taught them to do. It could be music, it

"DRUMMERS HAVE A GREAT DEAL OF HUMILITY IN ORDER TO STAY UNDERNEATH SOMEBODY ALL THAT TIME, AND GIVE THEM SUPPORT CONSTANTLY, AND GET LITTLE REWARD FOR IT."

could be literature—whatever area. Education is so we can learn things to become contributing citizens to the nation or the society that we live in. That's basically what I would hope to do. I would want to prepare a student to deal with any kind of a situation, if that were possible. And I think only here, in the United States of America, is that possible. I find that today, many of the musicians who work with symphony orchestras are familiar with improvisational techniques, and you will find them at a jam session. Prepare musicians so that they can deal with as many things as possible so they can make a living. That's what I would try to do with a student. I would in NO WAY deal with a student the way our educational system today deals with students, in the majority of our schools of higher learning, where everything is so one dimensional. That means if you're a piano major or a percussion major you have to learn standard, predominantly European repertoire, which you would only deal with if you were with a symphony orchestra. I think that's unfair.

Our educational system on a cultural level is strictly Germanic. *Strictly* Germanic. We're not a bi-lingual people and we're not a bi-cultural people, and that's the fault of our educational system. We should be much more cosmopolitan and *sophisticated,* if you will, than any other nation in the world because it's not a homogeneous society that we live in. In England it's all English. In Nigeria it's all Nigerian and it's African. In Japan it's all Japanese. But here in the United States of America the sociological mix is *everything.*

So, when we go to school, we go to school with just about every racial mix, and admixture, if you will, and religious makeup or composition. Everything! That's what we go to school with. But still in all, we're just taught one particular thing. It doesn't reflect the sociological makeup of this country. I would deal with a student to prepare that student to be as comfortable in an orchestral situation, where he has to be *re-creative,* and interpret other people's work, as well as for the students to be able to deal with their own creativity from an improvisational, as well as, an annotated point of view. Any drummer who studied with me, these are things that they would have to do.

I would advise any student to prepare themselves and get some kind of a BM or a BA in music. At the University of Massachusetts we've in some ways solved the problem. A student can get a Bachelor of Music degree with a concentration in jazz, which means the first two years of studies would prepare them to take a teaching job in an elementary school system or a high school system. If they want to get into a Master's or advanced degrees, of course they can teach on a college level. By the same token, the first two years, they're taught what we would call the formal, one-dimensional musical thing. After that, their junior and senior year they are able to concentrate solely on improvisational things, writing for Broadway shows, for big bands, for small combinations, or

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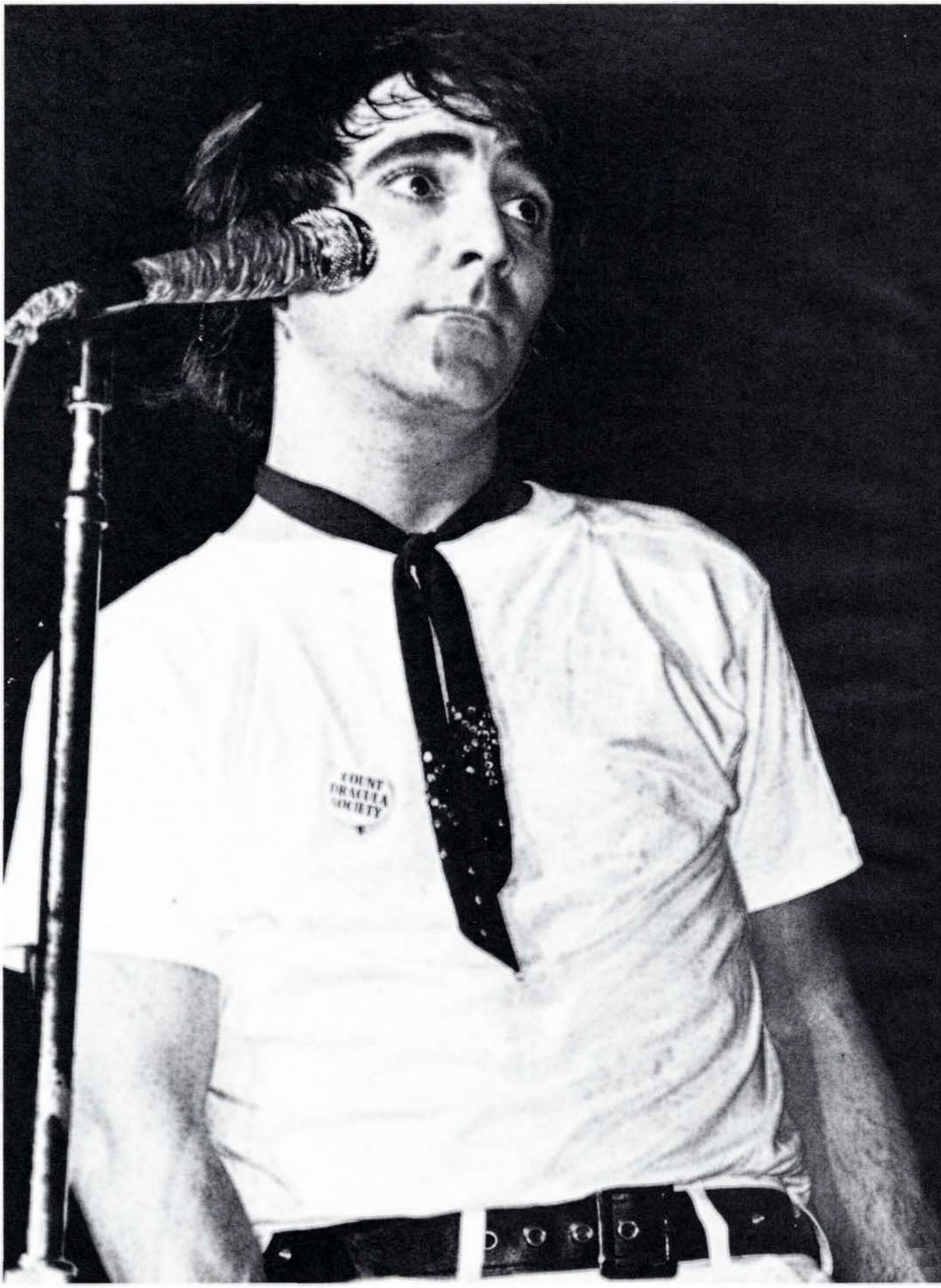
Photo by Collis Davis/Shaida

KEITH MOON



Remembered

by T.Bruce Wittet

with special thanks to Phil Evans

Photo by Richard E. Aaron

Keith Moon gave us laughs, he gave us music, and he gave us himself. There was no Moon without us, the audience. Here was a man who pitched drumsticks happily from the stage and made beautiful, bug-eyed faces, who looned his way around the globe, and who virtually revolutionized the basic tenets of drumset playing and design. His last act was a quiet one. He went to sleep and didn't get up. His death was no suicide: he had just proposed marriage, he was taking on new responsibilities, and he was toning down his drinking. Let us look further.

Keith Moon was horn on August 23, 1947. perhaps under a full moon, into the London neighborhood of Wembley, an emphatically working-class district. His father. Alfred Moon, was a motor mechanic and lived with his wife Kathleen. "Kitty," in the sort of row housing which is common in the industrialized cities in Great Britain. After Keith were born two daughters.

As a youth. Keith displayed very little of the flamboyance which would later endear him to the world press. He attended normal schools. Barham Primary and Alperton Secondary, and by all intents was a quiet student—not withdrawn, but by no means a conspicuous problem for teachers. He was friendly with local children but rarely engaged in team sports, preferring a little boxing.

As a pre-teen Keith joined the Boy Scouts, actually the Sea Cadets, which was a more demanding organization than any counterpart in America. Many of its members would stay several years and take up careers in the Navy or Army. Keith opted for a less rigorous routine and joined the band as a bugler, doubling on trumpet. The first time Keith was bitten by any genuine musical ambition was when he was fourteen or fifteen years of age. He got jobs, many of them as a salesman selling such commodities as sticking plaster, but found that he could at least equal such wages with a job in music. During a time in which he claimed to have had at least twenty-three day-jobs, he was playing weddings and parties and making four pounds a week.

The first drum kit he played was a friend's. They would practice to records, played loudly from a small mono player. Shortly after—this would be around 1960—his father bought him a drum set of undetermined brand name for about $50.00, and Keith first experienced the shakey lugs and hardware common on British-made drums of that era. Later in life. Keith Moon would be instrumental in changing all that.

Like all parents, Alfred and Kitty assumed that Keith's new-found interest in the drums was a passing thing, hut welcomed the change from bugle and trumpet. Keith, however, seized the sticks with conviction and abandon and proceeded to the usual succession of basement bands. These were groups without names, or with polite names as Keith later remembered them: "things like the Escort, the Pavement Oysters," which played town halls and factory dances. The material consisted of standards of the time as well as forays into rock and roll. While still a schoolboy. Moon joined the Beachcombers. The group was the ideal forum for his emerging talents as a frontman. In fact, he often came out from behind the drums to manage a few vocals. But the material was not contemporary and Keith was restless. He had heard talk about a group called the Detours which was allegedly innovative and daring, unlike his own band. One night he dropped around to a hotel to check out the competition: "I met the rest of the group when they were playing at the local boozer. Of course. I don't go to pubs, but as I was going past I heard this deafening call of the sirens from within so I went in to complain about the noise." Moon was both impressed and intimidated by the group. Its members, Messrs. Roger Daltrey, Pete Townshend, and John Entwhistle, all his seniors, had a certain confidence that follows after years of playing together. They had, in fact, been together for five years and if they were streetwise, it was due to engagements in Hamburg which, it will be noted, whipped the Beatles into shape. Neither bright-eyed nor nattily dressed, "sullen" as Moon remembered, they were a challenge for Keith. And what a challenge Keith Moon must have appeared! He arrived in a ginger corduroy suit with hair dyed to match. A couple of drinks later he asked if he might sit-in for a number or two. The tune that made history was apparently a number called "The Roadrunner" which was often used to separate the men from the boys, much as "Wipeout" was in early '60s America. Moon had no trouble with the song, but his borrowed drum kit didn't quite survive the test. He snapped a foot pedal and put the shaft through a bass drum head. There is no evidence to substantiate claims that he destroyed this particular drumset; there would be a lifetime left for this.

Keith Moon never joined the Detours, as such. He more or less drifted in and was accepted. Before any gigs were played the name became the Who. The original drummer with the lightweight hardware was bounced, as was one donated by Phillips Records who appeared at a record session rehearsal at the same time as Keith. It was embarassing for Moon, who continued to set up his equipment in the presence of another drummer, and several awkward moments passed before the group dismissed the Phillips chap. Things were clinched. Keith Moon became a member of the Who, although not for long. An enterprising manager, Peter Meaden, changed the name to the High Numbers and modified the dress code to attract the Mods. This was an adaptation not heartily endorsed by Moon and the others. Large segments of Britain's youth population at the time were engaged in a struggle of fashion and ideology typified by two groups, the trendy Mods and the unkempt and aggressive Rockers. Moon fancied himself among the latter but, at any rate, went along with management for the time being. Meaden wrote their first single. "I'm the Face/Zoot Suit." which was a minor flop. Chris Stamp (son of Terrence Stamp) and Kit Lambert, two young film makers who seemed well-to-do, took over the group's affairs. One of their first moves was to dump the name High Numbers and recall the Who. Gone were the cutsy clothes and smiling-faced posters: they would present this lot of noisy, raucous youth as they really were. In a triumph of marketing, Tuesday night at the Marquee club was chosen as "Who Night" and they succeeded in turning what is generally an off night into a packed house. Lambert and Stamp organized a nucleus of Who fans from Wembley and Shepherds Bush and issued ID cards and tickets to what was called the "Hundred Faces." Word got around that the Marquee was happening, and the original hundred or so in attendance multiplied. The gig lasted six months and helped to consolidate the band's approach and sound.

It was around this time that the Who stumbled onto a bit of pagan theatrics which would permanently endear them to a generation of rebellious youth looking to let off steam. Townshend swung his guitar widely once too often and severed the neck. One thing led to another. The drums were childsplay in this sort

of brawl: most of the English drums of the time, of which Premier was no exception, had fittings designed for light and discreet usage. One wack, and Moon could pop a lug right from the shell. And of course, if one were to actually seize and throw a tom-tom, havoc could result. Yes, the Who *did* destroy all that equipment. There were no means available to suddenly seize cheap guitars and drums and reduce them to individual piles of wood. And no, the equipment was *not* supplied free to the group. What this meant was that years later the world-reknown Who would be paying off hefty equipment bills. The famous Who, immortalized in the Monterey Festival film, was just beginning to make a few dollars.

Respectful of the fact that his group was finally coming into the clear after a debt of at least $80,000, Moon was updating his hardware in America to minimize permanent damage to any of his drums during the free-for-alls. However costly, though, the drums would topple as a climax to all the early concerts. It is no surprise that the group refused to do encores.

During the course of his career with the Who, the only group to which he was ever to express undying allegiance, Keith Moon penned only a handful of tunes: "Tommy's Holiday Camp," "I Need You" and "Cobwebs and Strange," plus some cooperative efforts such as "Wasp Man." Despite the absence of writer's royalties, money was issuing fast enough to support several hobbies, most notable of which was classy automobiles. Often without a driver's license, Moon would take to the road behind the wheel of, or would be chauferred in, some of the most magnificent cars ever designed.

The difference between Keith Moon and others fortunate enough to be able to support such a hobby as collecting fine cars, is that the vehicles were treated as disposable items. They were driven recklessly, often over terrain best suited to jeeps or half-tracks. Perhaps this is one of the reasons Moon acquired the hovercraft; it skirted little bumps and hills with ease, except for the time Moon took it onstage at an outdoor concert in 1972. It left the stage, accompanied by Moon, and dumped itself in a pond from which police extracted the pair in front of thousands of spectators.

Moon's cars were treated with something of the respect with which he approached his drums: they were fine instruments to behold but were intended foruse.

This attitude was pervasive in Keith's view of the material world. When I began work on this article I resolved from the outset to downplay, even to dismiss, the alleged antics of Keith Moon as so much surmise and wishful thinking. The English public seemed to thrive on tales of Moon's damaging exploits as serialized in the dailies and musical papers, while the European and American press were certainly no slouches. Everywhere, people thrilled to "Moon's latest" and it often becomes difficult to separate illusion from reality. Of course, Moon himself, for whom the world was the stage, did nothing to make it easier, knowing full well that this gratuitous promotion served to keep the Who in the public eye and maintain their image as disturbers.

So I resolved to present Moon as the musician, not the circus master. And yet, there is something in the miles of newspaper clippings, conversations with acquaintances, and morning-after accounts, which suggests that to ignore this part of Moon is to escape some of the essence of the man. After all, it is generally acknowledged that one's personality is reflected in one's playing and musical contributions. In this case it would be blasphemous, I'm sure in Moon's eyes, to skip some of his better deviant acts for the sake of making some artificial extraction of his musical self. Here, after all, was a man whose grave was decorated by Roger Daltrey with a wreath depicting a champagne bottle at point of entry into a television set.

Let us not forget that Keith's fun was gained, with few exceptions, at the expense of a few inanimate objects, impersonal chains of hotels which promise no surprises, and at a select few human beings who probably had it coming to them anyway. Note that where damage was inflicted, especially in instances involving lodgings, payment was quickly forthcoming in cash from the Who. Were this not the case, it is probable that Keith would have spent much of his life behind bars or in sound-proof rooms: he once remarked that we tolerate eccentricity from the rich while the poor are labeled criminal or insane.

The Who's appearance on the Smothers Brothers Show lent new meaning to the word "comedy." On the same show as the Who, Bette Davis and Mickey Rooney were billed. During their respective performances, Keith was busy ensuring that various key members of the stage crew were approaching intoxication. Their blurred state enabled him to affix a number of exploding charges to his drum shells; normally, one or two of these caps don't result in much damage, although in this instance Moon was looking for something beyond the realm of special effects. He blew the works, literally. The Who were well into their set when Keith directed that the charges be detonated. The ensuing explosion blew him oft his drum seat and set Pete Townshend's hair aflame. Parts of the drum kit lay in splinters about the stage.

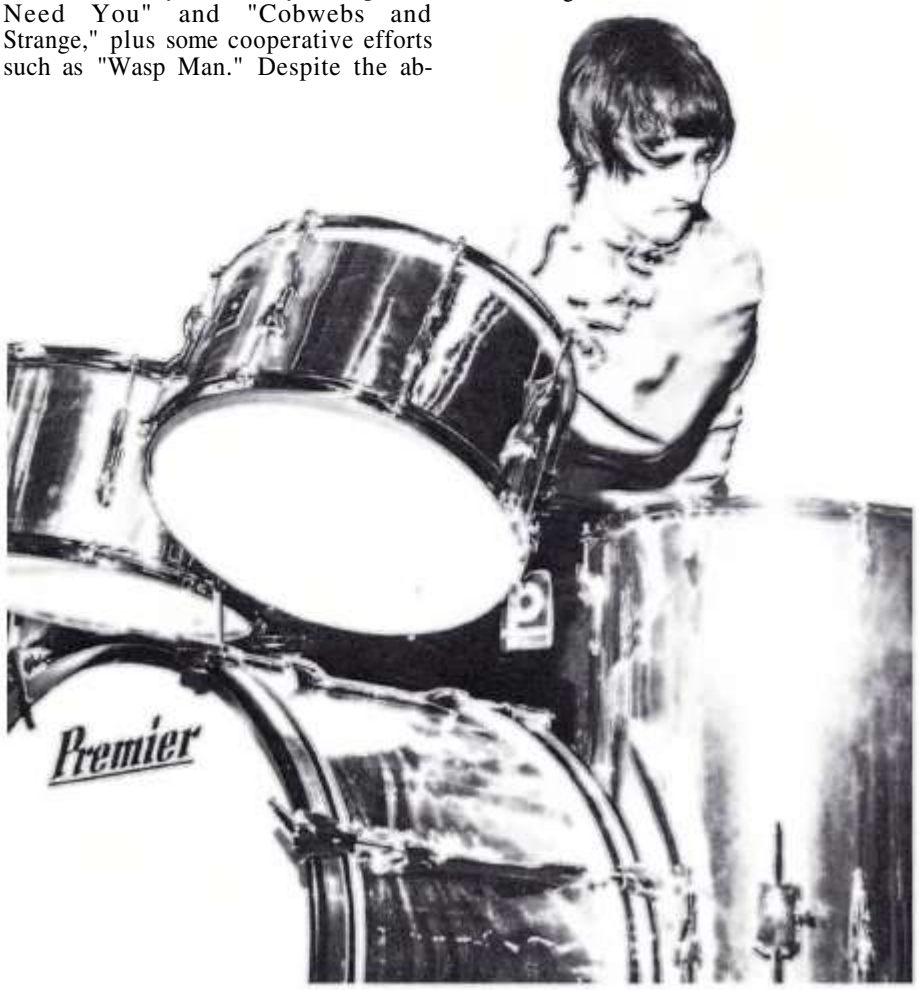


Photo by Neville Chadwick

Another incident involves a human derelict, a man of limited means and no-fixed-address. This is the incident of the Hobo and The Inn on the Park. Keith Moon had a genuine interest in mankind, especially when warmed with spirits. On other occasions he had invited skid row inhabitants for some merriment at English pubs to the surprise of the regular patrons and had bought rounds for all and sundry. This time, Moon got involved in conversation with a down and out fellow in a Soho bar. The chap was invited to the Playboy Club and was treated to a fine meal, dessert, and drinks. A pleasant evening was had by all until Keith discovered that his new-found friend had no place to stay, nor any money for accommodations. No problem. The chauffeur proceeded to the Inn on the Park, not by anyone's standards a place offering bed-and-breakfast rates. Not content to secure just any old room for this weary gentleman. Moon booked the Wellington Suite. The hotel was glad to oblige as cash was paid in advance.

There is a post-script to this quiet event. The Who office received a letter from the same hobo who. it seems, tried to publish a letter of thanks in the *London Daily Express* but was refused and his tale dismissed as nonsense.

Many of Keith Moon's pranks were directed at American property and institutions, although no country in which the Who performed was spared, especially Canada, which Moon found all too quiet on several occasions.

It was in America that Moon settled in the year before his death. This was a country which offered enormous potentialities for the sort of partying and frivolity which he enjoyed. Here were some of his friends—Harry Nilsson and Ringo Starr. Here were movie offers. Here he put together a solo album. *Two Sides of the Moon,* which reflected diverse influences from country to surf music. America also wore on Keith after a while. He claimed he was a tax exile but wasn't really. He still paid taxes to the Crown. And he never really stayed as long as he bragged. The longest haul in the United States was about nine months. The truth is that Moon missed England and especially the Who.

But for all his love of England, it was America from which came most of the musicians which Keith really admired. And the music which influenced Keith in the early days, and the drummers which played it, were primarily from America.

Keith Moon was a self-taught musician, entirely. He never took lessons and he could not read music. He simply seized the sticks and began to play. But this is over-simplifying, for Keith was influenced by some of the truly great drummers.

The big band drummers held Keith's attention. For one thing, they could hold their own against platoons of other musicians. He liked the way they tuned, the power with which they played, and some of the spark and theatrics which they gave to the role of drummer. The Who was the forum for Keith's development as a "big-band rock drummer." Before joining the Who. though, his drumming was more simple.

His first influences were drummers such as D. J. Fontana (Elvis' original drummer), Eric Delaney, the "twist-beat" drummers of the time (the Ventures), and the surf drummers of the American West Coast. He was a fanatical fan of the Beach Boys, Jan and Dean, the Ripchords and, of course, Elvis. These were the artists whose records he played along to in the early years and to whom he paid tribute on his solo album. Upon joining the Who, though, other influences became apparent: "people like Gene Krupa, Jo Jones, Buddy Rich, the big band drummers—they were the best. I'd see a big band with a double bass drum set-up, twirling the sticks, all the theatrics. They're the people I really dug growing up." He told *Melody Maker's* Chris Charlesworth in 1972: "My whole style of drumming changed when I joined (the Who). Before, I had just been copying straight from the records, but with the Who I had to develop a style of my own. . . . I took from Gene Krupa with all the stick twiddling and thought it was great. The sticks used to fly out of my hands because I was sweating like a pig. All these things had an effect on the audience."

A major preoccupation of Keith's was just that—to create an effect. Years later he would cite Liberace and Lawrence Welk as masters of showmanship, and included Englishmen David Bowie and Elton John on the list. And there were English drummers who Keith admired: Ringo, certainly, as well as, in later years, John Bonham and Bob Henrit, of Argent. He also cited a female who may be destined for obscurity. "Penny Blenkinsop—she's the stand-in for the Ivy Benson All Girls Band"!

But in the early years it was chiefly the American way which provided the major source of Moon's approach. He felt that many English drummers of the time, especially those reared in traditional jazz, were lacking a certain spontaneity.

Keith often mentioned Elvin Jones as chief among his influences. And to watch clips of each drummer doing his respective thing, a certain affinity is evident. Both drummers bounced ideas off strong front men, and both attacked the drums without mercy. Both Elvin and Keith would just as soon hammer away with the butt end of the stick, and both had a way with cymbals that would make the Zildjian family cringe. For one thing, the strength of Elvin's attack turned ride cymbals into crashes and this is manifested in Keith's playing. There are not too many Who tunes recorded in which you hear the delicate ping of a Joe Morello. Rather, it is something like the roar

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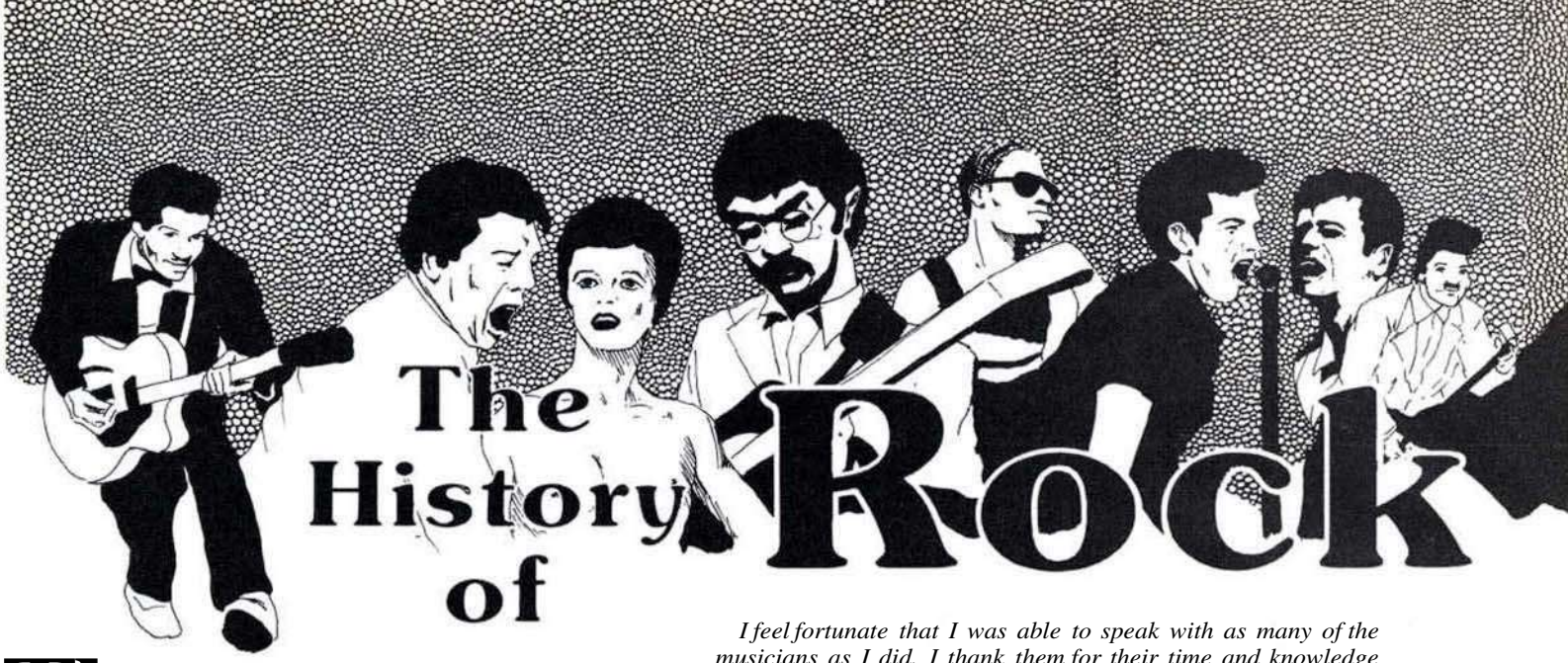

The Blues Influence

by Scott K. Fish

This is not the definitive statement on drums, drumming and drummers in the Fifties. I hope that the readers will take it upon themselves to search out the records I've used in this article. Most of them are out of print in the form I used, but they've been reissued enough times that serious drummers can find them. It's worth it. Music should be heard and experienced more than it should be written about.

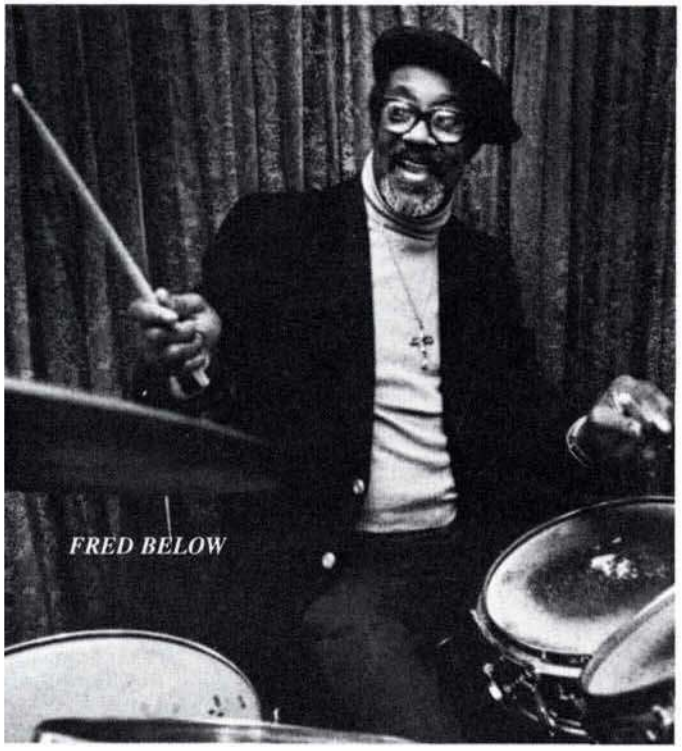

Photo by D. Shigley

I feel fortunate that I was able to speak with as many of the musicians as I did. I thank them for their time and knowledge and the readers will know who these musicians are as they read through the article.

I would also like to thank a few behind-the-scenes people who helped tremendously in this project: Hal Blaine, Buddy Harman, Jim and Cynthia Keltner, Honest Tom Pomposello, Sharkey Hall, and Jesse Sailes. Thank you for putting up with all of my questions and odd-hour phone calls! And special thanks for two gentlemen for tying up loose ends that would've been impossible to figure out: Willie Dixon and Fred Below.

Rock drumming was born of the culmination of two musical styles: blues and country/western. When historians discuss musical eras, rock for example, they refer to Muddy Waters, Chuck Berry, Bo Diddley, Elvis Presley, The Beatles, etc. What made the music of those individuals unique was the rhythmic aspect of the music. Far too little attention has been paid and credit given to the drummers that paved the way for each succeeding generation of musicians.

The purpose of this study is to highlight the styles, personalities, and contributions of the "key" drummers in rock: the "pioneers." There have been many good bands in rock without exceptional drummers. There have been exceptional, creative and unique drummers in less than exceptional bands.

Guitarist B. B. King once referred to blues music as a "battery" that rock always ended up going back to for a recharge. To get a firm grasp of the roots of rock drumming, one *must* study the blues drummers.

There were many classic blues drummers including Elgie Edmonds, Baby Face Foster, Fred Below, Odie Payne, S. P. Leary, Francis Clay, and Al Duncan. Let's take a look at the classic recordings of the blues artists that shaped rock and roll and study the evolution and contribution of the drummers and drumming.

Muddy Waters, a guitarist/singer/songwriter, migrated from Mississippi to Chicago. He was an acoustic guitarist and a slide player, influenced by Son House and the legendary Robert Johnson, who wrote some of the classic blues songs that are still being performed and recorded today. Muddy tried to perform in bars with just his acoustic guitar, but he soon found that playing in a noisy Chicago bar was much different than playing for people in the quiet of the Mississippi country life. So, Muddy began using an amplified guitar.

On "Kind Hearted Woman," recorded in 1948, there are no drums at all. Muddy is playing an electric "slide" guitar, and Ernest "Big" Crawford is preparing the way for what would become "backbeat" drums. The bassist hits a note on beats one and three, and slaps the bass on beats two and four *occasionally,* while walking through the chord changes of the song. That same year, on "I Can't Be Satisfied." the bassist is deliberately

Drumming Part 1

slapping on beats two and four. Electric bass guitars were not being used at this time.

Baby Face Foster was added as a guitarist/drummer to Muddy's band. In "Rollin' and Tumblin' " (a song recorded by many British bands in the Sixties), the bass plays a minimal role, and there is a percussive clicking playing. Possibly this was Foster playing on the rim of a drum with sticks.

In June 1950, Muddy recorded "Louisiana Blues" with Little Walter on harp (a giant talent who was almost solely responsible for forming what would become the standard rock-band format), Crawford on bass, and Elgie Edmonds on drums. Edmonds wasn't a spectacular drummer on these records but in all fairness, he had no role models.

Fred Below, a major drumming influence after Edmonds, told me that at the time of these recordings, Elgie was in his late 50s or early 60s. "See, Elgie had a style of playing for himself . . . and I had a more modern style. A lot of the things he was doing was from the old school of drumming. He kept his style and it didn't change, and that's why his style got kind of dated. He taught me a lot; showed me a lot of brushwork. He was a hell of a good brush player." Below said that Edmonds was a better jazz drummer than a blues drummer.

The most important aspects of his playing, and of the whole Waters' band at this time, was the feel of the music, which was *laid back* to the extreme! Sometimes, bars of music were left out. There wasn't the *now* familiar four and eight bar phrases. The melodic phrasing of the singers and the instrumentalists created a sound that was, at times, difficult to follow, if one were accustomed to standard song structure.

Willie Dixon, a genius who wrote most of the classic blues songs, and both played bass and arranged many of the Chess sessions, told me, "A lot of those guys back in those days wasn't even keeping time themselves. They didn't go by the drummer no way, because if the drummer didn't follow *them*—why it wouldn't be no record! Because they wouldn't follow the drummer no way."

For example, it is impossible to snap your fingers on the two and four beats to "Louisiana Blues" because the position of beat one varies so often. Musicians have been trying to copy the feel of records like these since the Fifties without success. Muddy was asked about that feeling in a *down beat* interview. He said, basically, that feel was a result of social conditions that don't exist anymore. "I came up through this scene that one day I eat, the next day I don't. Ain't got them kind of blues today."

Muddy's band recorded "Still a Fool" with Edmonds on bass drum only. This is a tough sounding record. The bass drum is stuffed or muffled, yet it retains a round, meaty sound. The song has a feel similar to some of the songs off the first Led Zeppelin album. It's amazing how Elgie Edmonds was able to pull that off using just a bass drum.

Muddy again recorded without a drummer in 1951, but in February of '52 we hear the full drumset being used on "Standing Around Crying." Edmonds plays some interesting fills which are sloppy and sound uneasy. Several explanations as to why the full drumset hadn't been used in Muddy's records until 1952 can only be guessed at. The recording facilities were certainly available—although Chess might not have had such facilities—but more than likely, Elgie Edmonds was a drummer who had to fit in with musicians who'd never worked with a drummer before. Some of them had probably never really worked with a band before. So the drums entered into the picture slowly, a little at a time. On some recordings, Edmonds only used a snare drum.

One of the best writers on blues, Pete Welding, described the Waters band of this period: "The characteristic sound Waters and his band projected was loud and brutal, with all the instruments save drums electrically amplified almost to the threshold of pain. The beat was slowed down and heavily emphasized, particularly at first, when Waters utilized such naive drummers as Baby Face Foster and Elgie Edmonds. The music was hard, mean and magnificent, and the band generated a blistering undertow of rhythmic power that swept all before it in a tumbling rush of sound."

While Muddy Waters' band was growing strong, three young musicians were performing together in Chicago for three to four years. They were Louis and David Meyers on guitars, and Junior Wells on harmonica. One day, after they'd been per-

Photo courtesy Clifton James

forming for years *without* a drummer, using foot-stomping as a substitute. Elgie Edmonds (who was still with Waters' hand) told Louis Meyers, "The way y'all play, y'all don't need no drummer, but y'all *do* need a drummer so you won't have to be stompin' your feet. I know a boy just out the Army, he'd be a good drummer for y'all." Enter Fred Below, a drummer who almost singlehandedly invented the book on Chicago-style blues drumming and was a major innovator in rock drumming.

I spoke to Fred Below at his home in Chicago and asked him about his drumming in the Fifties. "I began to work with Little Walter in the early Fifties. By working with Little Walter I was able to meet other blues artists. When I entered into the blues I wasn't familiar with the tunes they were doing. I was coming strictly from jazz. I had to learn what they were doing by going around and meeting some of the players like Junior Wells, David and Louis Meyer. David and Louis was the ones who taught me how to play the blues.

"I went to school with (jazz musicians) Gene Ammons, Benny Green, and Johnny Griffin. I went into the Army and got out in 1950. All the fellows that I knew like Johnny Griffin, Buddy Rich and Louie Bellson—they was so far out it was gone! I had to get back on the scene. All the players I knew weren't in Chicago no more. They was on the scene with big white bands. There was no way for me to get in touch with anybody.

"I happened to run across drummer Elgie Edmonds who used to be with Muddy Waters. He introduced me to some of the players like Memphis Slim and T-Bone Walker. I really didn't understand the kind of music that Muddy was playing then, but I was willing to learn, because at that time it was selling in the city. So, I just paid attention and learned how to play it! I established *my* way of playing it and it caught on with all the other blues guys. I had established a style that was from a jazz musician interpreting the blues in a different way. I established the backbeat."

Louis Meyers described Fred Below's first experience playing the blues in an interview in *Bines Unlimited.* "Below . . . tried to play with us but he couldn't. He said, 'I can't play with y'all, tonight is my last night.' I said, 'Man, it's funny you can't learn to play blues and you say you can play jazz and all be-bop and stuff, it's mighty funny you can't play blues. I can play jazz and you can't even play blues. You know there's something wrong about that.' So Below said, 'Well I'll tell you what, I'm gonna try it another two weeks. You talkin' about I can't play no blues and you can play jazz. I'm gonna learn to play the blues.' Shoot. Man, it didn't take Below two weeks to learn, but see, he had to get in there and create his own beat."

To dispel the image of "uneducated" drummers. Fred Below was a graduate of the Roy C. Knapp School of Drumming in Chicago. Another graduate of that school, Hal Blaine, told me a little bit about the Knapp School: "You studied music appreciation and all the aspects of it like any other business. You were in the heart of Chicago which was Polka country. South Chicago was black stuff. The West side was Polish stuff and different ethnic groups. There was some Puerto Rican stuff and Mexican stuff. There was a lot of music around, and most of the guys that went to that school were interested in all of it. It was an eight-hour-a-day school, five days a week. You had classes in sightreading, sight singing, and music appreciation. There was a band, and there was a get-together in a classroom that had a long table entirely covered in felt. The guys would sit with their sticks, side by side, and there would be twenty or thirty guys and everybody would be trading fours."

Below said he found playing blues "very illuminating. What made blues fascinating with me was it was a type of music that I wasn't familiar with and they didn't teach it in school. I don't think they do now! It's an all together different style. I had to play it in a way that would make sense to me. I went to school to learn how to play well. A lot of drummers out here just pick it up and don't really know what they're doing. I'm able to adjust myself and play in all types of bands and music because, not only do I *play* it, I can *read* it. That's where my musical experience is different from the average blues drummer. They don't have any musical background. I brought a background of reading, writing, and a musical understanding into a blues music that didn't really have any form to it.

"In the '50s they used to play three bars or six bars. I came in and stretched the three bars to *four* bars. Where they played six I made it eight. I adjusted the music from the 1950s up to today."

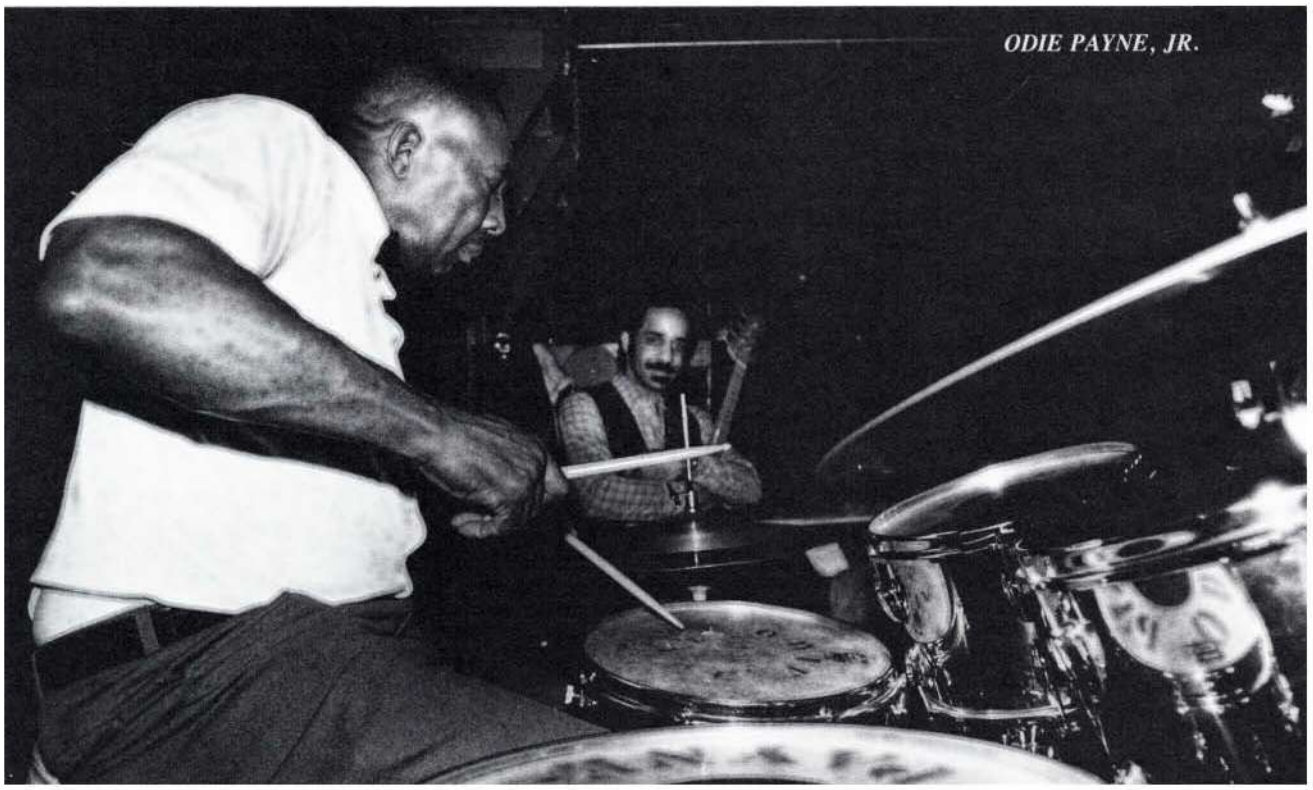

Photo by D. Shigley

In the latter part of 1952. Muddy Waters added Willie Dixon on acoustic bass and Below on drums. On "She's Alright" we hear the drumset recorded with heavy reverb. Below sounds uncomfortable, but the 12/8 ride-cymbal beat that became a trademark for slow to medium tempo blues songs can be heard here. In 1953 Muddy finally had the great band with Jimmy Rogers on guitar. Little Walter on harmonica. Otis Spann on piano. Willie Dixon on bass, and Fred Below on drums. Every member was a major contributor to the evolution of blues. "I Want You To Love Me" displays a tight band that's obviously been together a while. Below is playing sparingly here, and this is a great example of the drummer as a team player, so that the *whole* sound is near perfect.

The same band recorded "I Just Want To Make Love To You" (later re-recorded by The Rolling Stones) featuring a Muddy Waters trademark: stop time. In 1954, on "Hoochie Coochie Man" and "I'm Ready," this band has crystalized the Chicago blues sound. "I'm Ready" gives us the first use of the ride cymbal and a heavy snare backbeat on two and four. Prior to this, time keeping had been left to brushes on a snare drum, or playing on a closed hi-hat, similar to Below's technique on "Hoochie." which is a stop time song using neither crash nor ride cymbals.

By 1956, the same band recorded again for Chess with a much looser feeling, probably from developing confidence. Below is adding more fills than ever before. On "Just To Be With You" we're given the first taste of tom-tom fills, and Below is using his ride cymbal more than the hi-hat.

"I consider Odie Payne [*who'll be discussed later*] and Below as the best two drummers we had in that time," said Willie Dixon. "The early blues guys at that particular time—most of them was accustomed to just plain old backbeat drums. When a drummer go to putting in extra phrases in there—they didn't feel it. At that time, when Fred was trying to get it together himself, he wasn't always putting (the phrases) in as smooth. But, when you can put them in there smooth, then you don't have any complications. Below and Payne both had a lot of experience. [*Payne had also attended the Knapp School*] We had plenty of discussions all the time (about what to play in a song). Sometimes some guy wanted an upbeat or a downbeat: a lick like *this* or a lick like *that* in certain places. They'd be carrying along the rhythm in one pattern, then all of a sudden you'd get a turnaround or an emphasis on certain things. We'd try to get s*omething* of emphasis in various patterns. These are the things that kept the songs smooth, because (the drummers) would always be trying to get the pattern to where the music would blend with it enough to make the words stick out."

In 1952, Little Walter was recording under his own name for Chess with Muddy Waters on guitar, Jimmy Rogers, and Elgie Edmonds on drums. His recordings "completely revolutionized the role of the harmonica in the blues and added a new tonal dimension to the genre." Edmonds plays quite a bit different than he did with Muddy Waters, adding some unusual hi-hat licks that possibly could've been the result of being recorded heavily with reverb. On "Juke," Walter's first commercial success, Edmonds plays a jazz-style ride on the hi-hat. He's also accenting on the one and three beats with his snare drum, which gives the song a strange, out-of-time feeling. The phrase lengths are uneven, and the one beat doesn't always fall in the same place.

On "Mean Old World" and "Sad Hours." Edmonds is playing brushes without the accents on beats one and three. Instead, he maintains a straight quarter note feel, crashing a cymbal with the brush infrequently, and always on a one beat.

In 1953, Little Walter left Muddy Waters and joined up with Louis and David Meyers and Fred Below, and formed The Jukes, who later became The Aces.

This band with Below, Little Walter, and the Meyers brothers is thought by many people to be *the* band that paved the way for what would become rock and roll. At any rate, this band

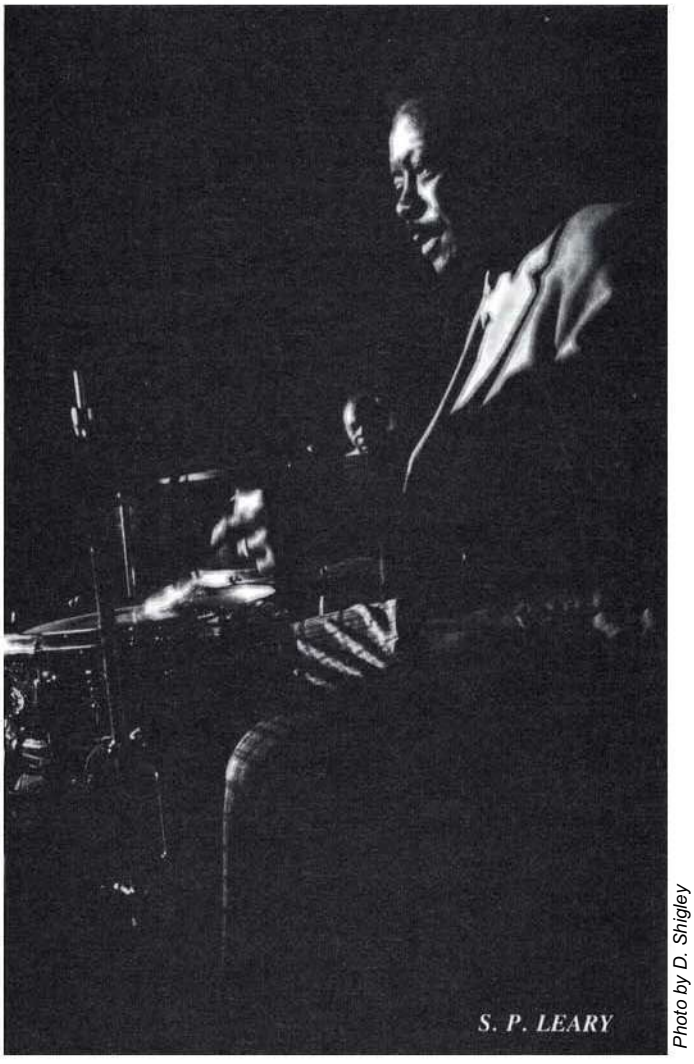

Photo by D. Shigley

turned the heads of many, many people. Louis Meyers recalls: "We toured for years all over the U.S. playing auditoriums, dance halls, road houses, night clubs. Here we were with amplified music with a different thing altogether. We was playing out of big amplifiers and (the other bands) are sitting there playing horns and things with one or two mic's, a ten-, twelve- or fifteen-piece band, but the people had to get up close to hear that. In the meantime, we had big amplifiers. Do you realize how strong an amplifier is just blowing an instrument out of if?

"Now you imagine we gone all amplifiers and here's these cats still playing the old style, just sitting up there playing drive-along-jimmy no amplifiers. I realized this at the time. We ran into quite a few bands out there with *names* that didn't have a chance. If they played their set before we played, just call themselves lucky because the next set they go back on them peoples just boo them off the bandstand; wouldn't let them play no more.

"Anything we play is gonna be heard whether it's right or wrong. Walter was playing like forty horns, man. His amplifier would sound like that sometimes. It was an altogether new different type of stuff that the people was accepting because we was whippin' it on 'em strong and sure. We was killin' 'em, man. One time I read in a paper that Little Walter was the baddest band in the land and it wasn't but us four. But we had something new and something different. And had we been men amongst ourselves we'd be strong right today; still be in a new bag with all the youngsters coming on—we'd still be playing something that the people would be enjoying from now on. But

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Musicians are often thought to have the same characteristics as the music they play. If we accept that premise, then in order to get an impression of a member of the Boston Symphony, we might first look at the music performed by "The Aristocrat of Orchestras." Simply calling it "classical music" is not enough, as there is a world of difference between a Mozart Piano Concerto, a tone poem by Strauss, a choral-symphony by Mahler, and The Rite of Spring *by Stravinsky. As a point of reference, try to imagine a rock group which must sound exactly like Chuck Berry on one tune, the Beatles on another. Yes on a third, and Frank Zappa on the fourth. If the word "versatile" comes to mind, you're on the right track.*

Vic Firth is truly versatile, and this is reflected in the music he plays, his many outside activities, and in his very personality. Concerning his music, he easily adapts to the varied requirements of the symphonic repertoire. In addition, his background includes work with jazz groups and dance bands. His outside activities include a thriving stick and mallet business, teaching, writing (method books, as well as, solo and ensemble material), and art collecting. Speaking with him, one is struck by his open-minded attitude about all types of music, and his ability to see relationships between many seemingly diverse aspects of life, music, and art.

VF: I actually started off playing jazz. I was about thirteen or fourteen when I first joined a group and, of course, they were all older men. When I was about fifteen, I formed my own band and we booked all over New England. It was an eighteen to twenty-piece band with a singer, and I also booked a small band with six or eight players, and we did a lot of work. I'd had the good fortune of starting with a fine teacher named Bob Ramsdell, who taught in Maine, where I'm from.

Upon graduation from high school, I entered the New England Conservatory, where I studied with Larry White, who was in the Boston Symphony. I was strictly a jazz player; I hadn't done anything but that. I had already been studying with Larry White for about two years while I was still in Maine. I used to come down to Boston every other week to take a lesson. So my mallets and percussion were in pretty good shape, but I had never seriously taken a tympani lesson at this point.

The summer after my first year, I had a chance to go on the road with a jazz trumpet player. I think the pay was about $120 a week, which in those days, was a veritable fortune. Meanwhile, there was a music club in Maine that was looking for someone they could send to Tanglewood on a full scholarship. So I was offered this scholarship to Tanglewood, which is the summer home of the Boston Symphony. I thought, "What the hell. I've never really played any classical music before, so I'll go to Tanglewood and see what the other side of the coin is all about." I got all caught up in the classical music scene. I took a complete change of course, and probably didn't sit behind a drum set again until twenty years later.

RM: What was it that attracted you so strongly to classical music?

VF: I suddenly saw all of this great, beautiful music. There was such a variety of it and there was such a lot there that I didn't know about. I guess I just thought it would be a lot of fun to see what it was all about. I don't think I realized at the time that I would get so wrapped up in it all, and take it so seriously, but I subsequently did.

RM: You had a lot of background in drums and mallets, but not on tympani. Did you have a lot of catching up to do?

VF: I went back to the Conservatory, where I had been studying with Charlie Smith. I also studied with Roman Szulc. who was my predecessor in the orchestra, and I spent two years studying with Saul Goodman. In terms of catching up, you know, in all honesty, any instrument is terribly difficult to play, and play well. But I don't think tympani is the hardest one, by any means, in terms of the technical problems one has to solve. In other words, if you compare it to an oboe or violin, they have tons more to accomplish before they arrive at a certain standard as opposed to a tympanist. Now I know I'm going to get killed by all the other tympanists by saying that, but I don't think it's all that difficult. Now, as I said, everything is difficult to play well and play artistically—you have to have a certain God-given talent to do more than just pound away. But in terms of time

Vic Firth: Beyond The Classical Stereotype

by Rick Mattingly

input; I know fiddle players who started when they were seven, and who have been playing for thirty years, and they still have repertoire they haven't accomplished yet. I don't think that holds true on tympani. It's a different kind of an instrument. It isn't a solo instrument where the solo repertoire goes on for years, never mind the orchestral repertoire, which goes on for centuries. We just don't play that much.

RM: I think a lot of people find *tuning* the tympani to be a bigger problem than *playing* them.

VF: If you have a problem with finding pitch, then as a tympanist, you're dead. You have to learn to tune to an E-flat while the orchestra's playing in E-major. The only way you can do that is either by practicing your tunings with a record playing, or actually have a hundred musicians around you. Nobody's about to give you that kind of free time, so you sort of have to learn on the job. That's why I encourage my students to play anywhere and with anyone. Play with every local orchestra, every hillbilly orchestra, anything you can play tympani with, PLAY! Pay or no pay. Having that experience will pay you further down the way.

RM: How did you join the Boston Symphony?

VF: While I was in my senior year at the Conservatory, I had the good fortune to audition for the symphony, and I was accepted as a percussionist. The conductor then was Charles Munch, and I think he liked young blood. They had a theory in those days to put a young person with a more experienced person, and they would complement each other.

RM: Some people contend that playing in a symphony orchestra is the job of a craftsman rather than of a creative musician.

VF: I think to a certain extent someone could give me a very strong argument that that's true. We do have a printed part and it very specifically instructs you what to play. However, once you have become more experienced, you can see all kinds of subtleties in how you color what's there to play, and how you can shade it. I take all kinds of liberties on what's written and what I play. By that I don't mean I change rhythms; it's a more sophisticated, and I might add restricted, area. There is where you separate the pros—those who can find the subtleties.

The average listener is not really aware of how much freedom there is in this music. Now if you were to say to me, "I play in a rock group and we play certain tunes every night and they're never twice the same," I could say, "Well, we played the fifth Beethoven symphony five times on our last road trip, and it was never twice the same either." But the differences are much more subtle and low-key than the differences that the rock drummer would be describing. I think it's creativity in a different way. If I were playing with a jazz group, I obviously would be inspired by the spur-ot-the-moment kind of thing, and I would maybe do things totally different, whereas I can't say I would do that in the Boston Symphony. But you would be amazed at the variation of things we do within the confines of what the composer has stated. By the same token, although jazz is improvisatory, the jazz musician still has certain guidelines to follow.

We get audiences who will come to hear different conductors do the same piece, and they definitely know what they're listening to and appreciate the differences. But the classical music audience is very limited. It's too bad that classical music doesn't get to more people, but by virtue of the fact that it's expensive to put on, and the houses are so extremely limited in size, a lot of people never get to hear it.

RM: Society seems to be oriented towards picking favorites—you are supposed to pick your favorite music and then only listen to that one style.

VF: There's something to be enjoyed from rock, from jazz, from classical, from whatever. That's why it's a damn shame that more people can't have the exposure to enjoy it all and not pick sides. It's all there. I think if more people heard the whole music spectrum, they would enjoy music more, knowing what there is around to hear.

Most of the rock concerts I go to, everybody's yelling and screaming and throwing rolls of toilet paper. They're having a ball, but they're suddenly going to realize that there are other sides to musical experience than just loud. Right now, there seems to be an awful lot of *just* loud music. Some of the things they

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are doing are beautiful, and musically they are very exciting. But I don't need to be overwhelmed with sound to be impressed with beauty. A great painting does not have to be the size of a billboard. It doesn't have anything to do with size—a miniature painting can be just as beautiful. When they try to overwhelm me with sound just for the sake of overwhelming me with sound, to me, that has nothing to do with great music.

If I were going to take someone who was not into classical music to a concert, it's for sure I wouldn't take them to an all-Mozart concert or a Haydn Mass, or a Brahms Requiem. The first concert they go to would have to be something like the Tchaikovsky 5th or 6th symphony, or Beethoven's 5th, 7th or 9th, or maybe Stravinsky's *Rite of Spring.* There's something there that they would immediately be able to identify with, either because it's more contemporary, or it generates a certain excitement, or they might have heard it somewhere before but didn't know what it was. Then, when they realize that a lot of music is exciting, and it moves them emotionally, they might go to a rock concert and be moved by it, and six months later they might go to a symphony concert and say, "Gee, that's equally enjoyable for different reasons."

RM: Even within the same area, music is often presented as being a competition between artists. I recently heard Roy Burns and Jack DeJohnette do a clinic together, and afterwards, Roy and I discussed the fact that a few years ago. it would have been presented as a "drum battle."

VF: Maybe it's changing. If Roy Burns and Jack DeJohnette can get together and it's no longer a battle of the drums, but simply two artists presenting their styles of playing and their ways of doing things, that's a compliment to them and it's a compliment to those who are listening. We've come a long way already.

Today, players feel less competitive. When people feel terribly competitive, it may only be a facade for their insecurity. The better players don't feel as competitive. They do a certain thing and they know what it is and how they do it. I never feel competitive with anybody. When we go into a city that has another great orchestra, I don't feel I'm competing with the tympani player that's there. He wouldn't be there unless he was a great player. We do things differently and both our styles are very accepted and highly thought out. He may be red and I may be blue—it doesn't make any difference. Both colors are acceptable. I don't feel I have to compete, nor do I want to compete, and I don't want anybody to feel that they have to compete with me.

I remember years ago, every time somebody played three notes that were fast, everybody would turn around and look. Everybody was terribly competitive about everything. I think we're becoming more educated and more human and more well-behaved professionally. Among the young students today, I see much less hostility and more friendliness and more admiration for someone who does something well. When they hear someone doing something better than they can do, instead of getting mad or envious, they accept that as a challenge to go out and practice more.

RM: As a performer, how important is it to have experience playing other styles of music than the one you are specifically involved with?

VF: The more we know about the other areas, the better we do in our individual area. I know that I wouldn't have such good time today if I hadn't played drum set. I see other classical musicians who have no jazz background, and although they do their jobs well, I know that if they could have had some exposure like I had. they would be much better players. If you ever suggested that to them, they would look at you in stark horror. A lot of symphony playing doesn't involve keeping time, true, but that brings up the other side. There are a lot of things in jazz or rock where you don't necessarily want to keep time. You're looking for that abstract quality. Had you played something in the classical area, you could let that spill over. You would have a better grasp on a phrase and a line, and what it means.

I don't just teach classical students—I also have jazz and rock drummers who study with me. One of the first things I say is that there is no musical separation. I don't treat one concept any different than I treat another. They study the same music in the same way. And nobody ever look startled. They say, "Great! That's just what I wanted to do."

What we're talking about is sound—how to make sound and the technique of producing a sound. To do that, first, you've got to develop your hands. Then you've got to develop your ears to determine the quality of sound you're looking for. The brain then transfers that to the hands, which now have the technique developed to put it on the instrument. And that's what it's all about.

Once you have that concept of producing sound, you can play what I play or you can play with Rush. It's that simple. Now I couldn't sit in with Rush, because I don't understand the qualities they want. But I *have* had experience producing sound and I have technique, so given a little time to understand those qualities, I don't think it would take me so long. Similarly, I'm sure Neil Peart could come into the Boston Symphony and do the same things I do, in terms of producing sound, because he's very conscious of sound. Obviously he doesn't know the repertoire like I do, nor do I know his repertoire, but we're related in the craft we're involved with.

RM: A moment ago, you mentioned people being moved emotionally by music.

VF: To make an audience enjoy music, they must witness some emotional experience. You've got to move them somehow. They've either got to be moved by the emotion of joy, or happiness, or sadness, or the music has got to bring out something that sounds grotesque, or serene, or ugly—you could take any adjective you want to describe a player's performance. But if you don't move that audience, the one option left to them is boredom.

To eliminate boredom, it takes some personality on the part of the player. I've seen players who had all the technical proficiency in the world, but when they played, their personality was not in the music. It doesn't matter which field of music you're talking about, the great players all have something they generate that's part of their personality. It gets into the veins of the music and is then passed on to the veins of the listener. And that's when you get something worthwhile happening musically. I heard Journey recently, and Steve Smith is a great drummer with that group. That guy starts to drive and push and that group takes off. He's so exciting it's just unbelievable. In any type of music, there's something about certain players that keeps your attention. Something in their personality amalgamates with what they do musically, and that's what makes them exciting.

RM: A lot of the modern recording techniques seem to be designed to eliminate the player's personality.

VF: I've seen it happen in Symphony Hall. We've made recordings where I've ended up in a tent, all miked up, the brass has been three miles away when we should be close together, the strings have been all broken up, and the conductor—we've done recordings in the round where we're looking at the conductor's backside! It's terrible! The craziest, most non-musical things you could ever do, from the basis of what music is all about. I mean, music is about people who not only have contact through musical ideas which are connected, but should be together physically to get the feeling; to play off of each other; to bounce off of each other. To isolate these people and make them void of any emotional contact, to me, is castrating the music itself.

The pendulum always swings too far in any given direction, but after you've been around long enough to see pink pants come in and out about four times, you don't worry about it. I remember when the first electronic devices came out about twenty years ago, and the talk was that they were going to replace live musicians. What you see as you look back is that there are certain improvements as a result of these innovations, but they don't replace anything. We've got different recording techniques to be sure. But I wonder if at some point somebody will get a group together, set them up just like they were doing a performance, put a couple of microphones in front of them, and all of a sudden, everybody will say. "This is the way it should be." The pendulum will swing back in the other direction; to the other extreme.

Right now, I think they are getting more involved with engineers than they are with music making. You can dehumanize the music as much as you want, and you will get some records, and you will probably get some people who are dehumanized who think it's wonderful. I don't know—you may get a good musical result, but again, I think it's the kind of thing that's gone way over to one side. Then it comes back and you get some ridiculous extreme on the other side. From recording in the round with the orchestra all broken up, we have another engineer come in who says, "Oh no, we have to be just like you were doing a performance." He puts everything right back in its place, makes the record, and everybody says it's the greatest thing we ever did. Meanwhile, twenty years ago, that's the only way we did it.

"RIGHT NOW, THERE SEEMS TO BE AN AWFUL LOT OF* JUST *LOUD MUSIC. SOME OF THE THINGS THEY ARE DOING ARE BEAUTIFUL, AND MUSICALLY THEY ARE VERY EXCITING. BUT I DON'T NEED TO BE OVERWHELMED WITH SOUND TO BE IMPRESSED WITH BEAUTY. A GREAT PAINTING DOES NOT HAVE TO BE THE SIZE OF A BILLBOARD."

RM: You've been in the Boston Symphony for over thirty years, and you've played a lot of the same music many, many times. Do you ever get bored with it?

VF: No. It's as exciting now as it was the first day I went in. My first few years in the orchestra I was overwhelmed by the sound of the orchestra and the calibre of players around me. And there was a lot to be learned. It's still overwhelming to play great music with great musicians, but for slightly different reasons. When I first went in, it was like being on a fast roller-coaster ride, and I was hanging on for dear life. Now, the roller-coaster ride is just as fast, but instead of hanging on. I might be pole-vaulting at the same time. Playing good music with a fine group of musicians will always be exciting.

RM: There are probably a lot of people who know you more for your sticks than for your playing. How and why did you get in the stick business?

VF: The reason was, years ago, I was never satisfied with the commercial sticks available, so I made sticks for myself. The next thing I knew, my students started saying. "I'd like to have a pair of those sticks." So the next time I called the wood turner who was making them for me, I told him to send down ten pair instead of the usual two pair. Then I started getting letters from people saying, "I saw a pair of your sticks. Could you make me some?" So then I was ordering fifty pair. Next, Maurie Lishon from Frank's Drum Shop called and said, "I hear you're in the drum stick business. Can we sell your sticks?" So then I started ordering a hundred pair. Then another couple of dealers called and the hundred pair went to two hundred pair. Over the last fifteen years, we've gone from that to where we now keep an inventory of about a hundred-thousand pair of sticks at all times, and we're shipping all over the world.

We're going at it full-steam. I've probably got the most complete line of sticks of any manufacturer, in that we not only make many drum sticks, but we also make vibe sticks, tympani sticks, and Leigh Stephens marimba sticks. I think we've got about sixty models now. I can't believe my involvement, but it's been kind of fun and I've been lucky. I think I'm inclined to be a workaholic anyway.

We're terribly fussy with the quality control. We guarantee all of the products. I guarantee sticks against warpage, and I never heard of anybody who does that. Those sticks get rolled from the time they come out of the burlap bag as a dowel. The last time around, I personally roll them. I pull out all of the warped ones, and they end up as kindling in my fireplace. I have the most expensive, monogrammed kindling wood in the world! We reject thousands of sticks every year. By doing that, we cater to the drummer who's discriminating and fussy, and to whom it's still important to have a straight drumstick.

I have two people who spend their life just pitch-pairing sticks. We wanted to match the sticks as perfectly as possible, so we bought a very expensive digital readout scale. We got exact weights on every stick, calibrated to hundredths of thousandths of ounces, and they weren't a pair! The pitch was so far apart that when you'd hit the drum, you'd hear two different sounds—a distinct difference in pitch. So we went back to the old-fashioned way of just pitch-pairing, and that's about 99% true.

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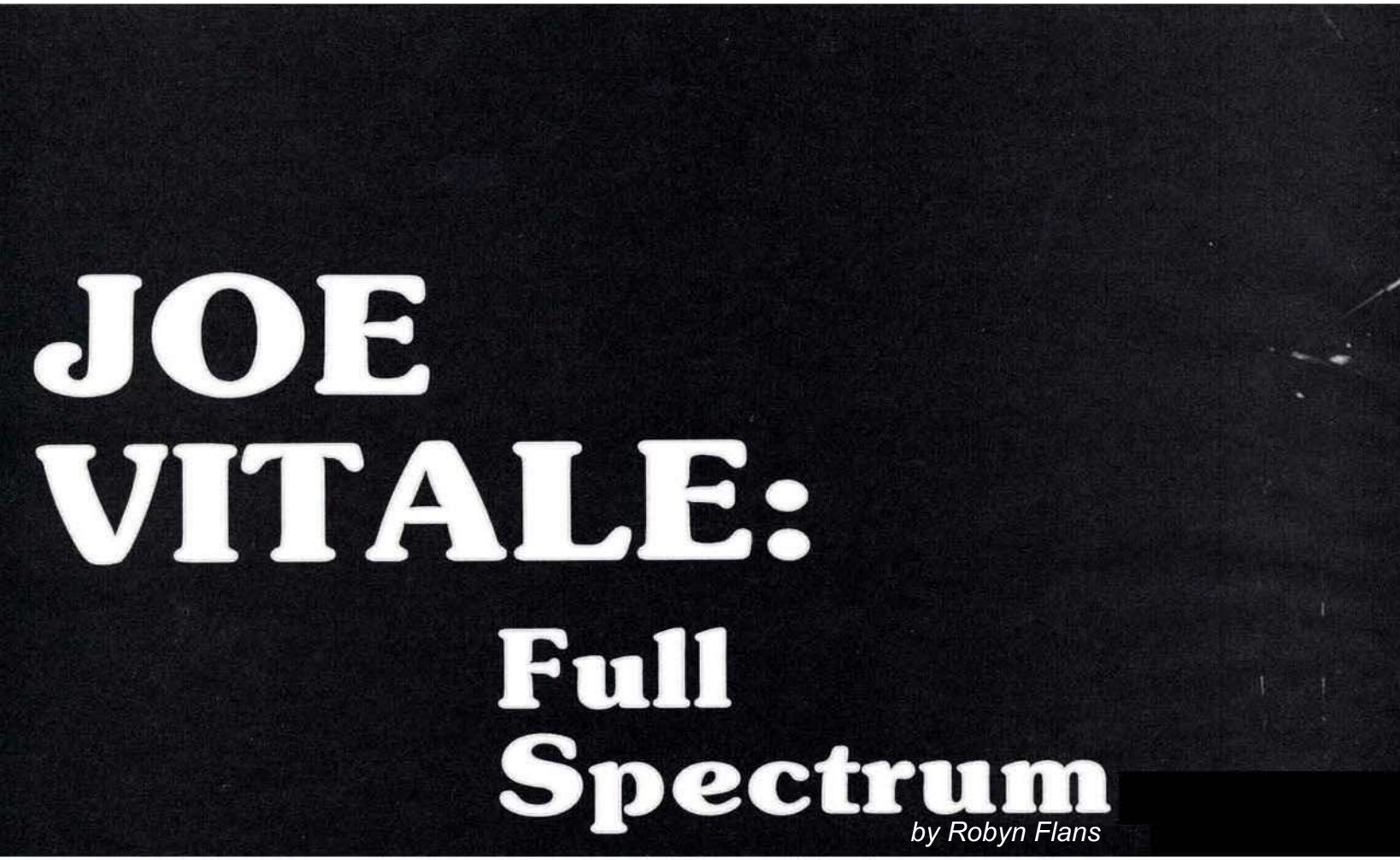

JOE VITALE: Full Spectrum

by Robyn Flans

Joe Vitale is a drummer, because, he laughed, "I'm Italian and my mom has pots and pans at home. That's why most drummers are Italian. You ever notice that? I would say 75% of the drummers are Italian and the other 25% should be," Vitale teased, in what was his first display of his typical good sense of humor. "Guys like Carmine (Appice) and Rick Marotta are all drummers because their moms had hundreds of pots and pans and wooden spoons."

Along a more serious vein, Vitale explained that his father was a big-band musician. When Joe was only eleven, he was playing in a jazz trio with his father on piano and his brother on bass.

"Being from the old school, my father encouraged me to pursue an education. In other words, even if it's music, get a degree so you can always teach. But as a youngster, my father saw that I was not just messing around and that there was something about the drums that I was really drawn to. I got my first Ludwig kit when I was six. and they were good little drums. I wish I had those drums today."

From ages six to twelve, Vitale had three different local teachers who stressed different aspects. One taught theory, one taught rudiments and one was for actual playing and application.

"Each was really a fine teacher in his particular field. The rudiment teacher wasn't necessarily a good trap-set drummer, but he sure was good for teaching coordination and the basic foundations of drumming, which you don't *have* to know, but I'm glad I learned it because it has helped numerous times. I've done a bunch of soundtracks and just knowing that theory really comes in handy when people throw charts at you. You don't *have* to be able to read charts, but the more you know, the better your chances are in the gigs you get.

"When I was about twelve or thirteen. I won a contest and the winner got five or six question and answer type lessons, theory and playing, with Joe Morello. I learned so much in so short a time. He really is good. He can teach you things that you can't get somewhere else. Things like exercises, the way to exercise coordination, independence with your four limbs—and it was remarkable. Nobody can learn something real fancy or technical overnight—you've got to practice—but his genius is that he can teach you to teach yourself."

Vitale took private lessons until he was about fourteen, having begun to play in local rock and roll bands, breaking out of the jazz scene in which he had been involved with his family.

"In 1964, I was heavily into playing drums and that's when everybody saw the Beatles on Ed Sullivan. The chemistry was unreal because I was at *that* age, fourteen, playing drums in a little band, and I just said, 'I want to do that.' "

About Ringo, he said, "For the time, he did parts that now, in the last decade, we're all learning to do. In the '60s, for some reason, everybody was trying to be real flashy, with a lot of crazy and fast drum parts. What I admire most about Ringo is that he already knew to play a nice fat backbeat, simple, and play to the song instead of trying to play 'lead drums.' The drum parts he played throughout the Beatles could work in any of today's music. He was a great drummer.

"I can only think of a few idols back then that really stick out in my mind. John Bonham and Keith Moon, who we've unfortunately lost, and Dino Danelli (of the Rascals). I always remember him because I loved him."

In fact, his first band, the Echos, was a group much influenced by the Young Rascals "of course, because of Dino

Photo by Paul Natkin/Photo Reserve

Danelli. I mean, if I was in the band, we had to do some Young Rascals' material. So we did that, some Beach Boys and Beatles stuff, but mostly the American music. My evolution was probably the same as everybody's back then, from one band to the next."

Between 1962 and 1970, Vitale did nothing but play in local bands, and once in high school, he became interested in the keyboards and flute as well, becoming involved in classical music. He worked with some instructors at Oberlin, a school of music in Ohio, and "I started losing my mind. I wanted to know it all. That's great incentive and great aggression, but you can't do everything, so you have to pick the things you really love. I love playing flute, only because it's so different from drums. If you play saxophone, maybe you take up flute, but *drums* and flute is crazy. That was appealing and intriguing to me, not just because it was tickling my fancy, but also because I could use it."

And Vitale does indeed use it all. He is proficient enough on keyboards to have played with some of the major groups, such as the Eagles on their *Long Run* tour and Joe Walsh's recent tour, in which he alternates between the two instruments on stage.

As a songwriter also, he feels musical expansion is essential. "I think drummers should investigate either keyboards or guitar, just on the side, because you don't want to spread yourself *too* thin. A lot of drummers have great ideas for songs because they think in rhythm, which is music. I play piano like I play drums almost. It's very rhythmic, and so my songs tend to reflect that sometimes, and I like that. If drummers care to write songs, and they should care to write music because they have a lot to give instead ofjust being the backbeat, one of the most important things they should do is take up some other instruments. Just enough to be able to sit down and tinker on the piano and write some songs.

"Going from drums to keyboard was a bit of an adjustment because it's a whole other world. You've got to learn notes. That's why I think it's really important for drummers to at least check it out. I don't even care to be a keyboard player, but I've had so many years of study and practice, that I'm playing keyboards in some bands, which is fun. I'd much rather be playing the drums, because I'm more comfortable. But after so many years, I've gotten pretty relaxed with the keyboards. It's very advantageous in the studio, because when I write songs, there's a certain feel I get out of the keyboard, having been a drummer. You can take the best keyboard player and he'll learn the part in a second, but he doesn't have that certain feel which comes from playing drums. You can't teach that to somebody unless somebody is already a natural and can cop that feel. Drummers have a big advantage because they understand rhythm; they understand a pocket or a groove. When you take that and apply it. that's what we try to get out of the rhythm guitar players and bass players. I think all guitar players and piano players should study a little bit of drums also, to understand what that instrument does and the link-up between all instruments. I feel real blessed that I was able to have that discipline and the initiative to do that when I was in high school. Now, as I'm getting older and losing some of that discipline, it would be difficult to start something new. I don't think I would do it now."

He also mastered classical percussion and tympani, so much so. that he was offered a job at age nineteen to play with the Cleveland Orchestra, one of the most

prestigious symphonies in the world. Because he had come in first place in solo and ensemble work in various contests, he was recommended for the audition by both Ohio and Kent State. "The audition was the hardest thing I've ever had to do. They want sight reading and accuracy with speed.

"I was very flattered when the offer came up. but it was just not what I wanted to do. I wanted to play rock and roll, although I didn't want to just limit myself to learning how to play that either. But just knowing that I had the knowledge stashed away to have done that was enough for me. My father thought I was out of my mind, but that's how fathers are. When an offer like that comes up it's so conservative and so *right,"* he says, with emphasis on the last word. "I looked at it very intelligently, I thought. I saw it as flattering that they felt I had enough ability to do that, and I think later on in life. I would like to do that. That would be an ideal situation when I no longer want to tour. I also got a bunch of scholarship offers, but I wanted to pursue rock and roll."

After two years of college, he did just that. His first major gig was with Ted Nugent. of which he says, "I sure lost a lot of weight and got a lot of chops doing that. We were mega-rock. It was great to work with him, though. I needed that. I had been playing club dates and stuff like that, so I did that for a year and then Joe Walsh called. Our association goes back to 1967. We both lived in Kent. Ohio. and were in local bands in the area. Anyway, Ted knew this. I had told him that someday, maybe, I'd have to leave because Joe and I had talked about being in a group together. So he did call one day and said, 'Let's do it.' That was '72 and I went to Colorado. We put Barnstorm together and, from that point to now. there's a lot that went on."

Recording didn't really enter into his career until Walsh decided to disband Barnstorm and begin recording a couple of albums as a solo artist. Since then. Vitale has done an abundance of recording with Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young, collectively and separately. Rick Deringer, Edgar Winter, Michael Stanley and Boz Scaggs. Currently, his duties consist of *50%* live performing and 50% recording. He has toured with such artists as Peter Frampton in 1977 and 1978. and Stephen Stills for six months, culminating in the historic "Havana Jam" in Cuba. He is perhaps best known for his role in the Eagles' *Long Run* tour.

"I couldn't possibly figure out how I could play in the Eagles. When they called, I said, 'What do you need me for'?' I mean, Henley can hold his own. He's a fine drummer and an incredible singer and to do both, impresses the hell out of me. That's hard to do. But they said that about half the tunes needed keyboard parts and percussion stuff, and on some of the rock and roll tunes, they'd love double drums. Henley was great to play with. He plays the same as he did before I was in the Eagles—the same parts and everything. I kind of supported that by playing some stuff that was overdubbed on their albums; some extra percussion stuff or drum parts. Sometimes, he did all the drum stuff and I just played congas or something. But the double drum stuff, in this case, was to fatten it up a little and it worked out really good. We did a couple of things where we'd play off of each other and we did a few songs where we played the same."

On Joe Walsh's most recent tour, Vitale had the opportunity to play double drums with Russ Kunkel. an experience he enjoyed immensely. "It was the greatest thing in my whole career as a drummer." he exclaimed. "I think it's because we've played in the same bands together. The first time I played with Russ Kunkel was on a Joe Walsh song called "In the City." The Eagles did that, but the original version of "In the City" was for a movie called *The Warriors,* and Kunkel and I played double drums on that song. When we did that, we said. 'Hey. this is fun!' We've played together in different situations, like some Crosby. Stills and Nash stuff, where Russell would play drums and I would play keyboards or I'd play drums and he'd play percussion. But from that 'In the City' session, we said, 'We've got to do this someday.' Walsh loves Russell and I'd been Joe's drummer, so he kind of asked me if I'd mind if we used double drummers this tour with Russell. I said. 'You're kidding!' And Joe said, 'Well.

Photo by Rick Malkin

we don't have to if you think that's putting you on the spot.' And I said. 'Will you please put me on the spot and do that?' So he called Russell and the two of us were like little kids—so excited.

"It's great because we think alike. We interpret songs alike. We have different styles, but *because* of that, it works. Not all drummers can pair up and play together. I kind of play like him on some songs and he kind of plays like me on some songs, and then again, we play totally different on some things. It's magical and it works. It can either work or it doesn't; it can either be very great or it can be chaotic.

"There are more ways to use double drummers than to just work out every little beat and fill the same. To me, that's no fun. It looks great and it's dramatic and theatrical, but you only have to throw a couple of those in a night. If you really intelligently use two drummers, you can sound like one drummer, doing things which one person cannot do. It's not that we're so cool, it's just that when you've got four hands and four feet, there are things you can do that one drummer can't do unless you overdub stuff. That's what we go for. We've worked out some stuff where each of us is playing extremely simple, but when you put those two parts together, it's unbelievable. So that's the fun we're having and the way we envisioned it. It is in no way limiting. We could be real fancy and real crazy and overplay, but we're just intelligently putting our talents together to be creative. He is so easy to play with. His tempo and his time are just unbelievable."

Up until recently, Vitale generally used double bass drums, although not while working with another drummer. While in Japan recently, he was approached by Yamaha, who told him he should be playing their drums. He agreed wholeheartedly. Currently endorsing them, he says. "I would have *bought* those drums if they had been available in the U.S."

His set is the *9000* Series, and consists of a 22" bass drum, 8", 10", 12" and 13" mounted toms, and 14" and 16" floor toms. His set-up also includes 26" and 29" Ludwig *Professional* tympani (a holdover from his classical days), as well as. four Syndrums and two Synares.

"Everybody likes different tension on drums, but I like to pick drum sizes to parallel the depth. If you want a tom to hav e a high pitch, get a small drum. It's really bad to take a 12" tom and tune the head real low to get it to sound fat. If that's what you want, don't get a 12" drum. When I put heads on. the first thing I do is put them on real tight and let them set for about an hour so they stretch a little. Then I back down on the tension. It's the same principle as you use for guitar strings. I have a wrench that I use for tuning a drum, and for some reason, it works. That tunes the head just above wrinkling and that's how I like it; they're not too loose. By wrinkling, I mean where you've got too much play around the edges: around the rim. Then I let the drum do the rest. Of course. I tune the top and bottom heads the same pitch. That's the only way they work. If not. you're going to be fighting with the drum, tightening it and loosening it. So I like them a little bit above wrinkling. If I want high toms. I go out and buy a couple of high toms and use them instead of the big ones. I like the 12", 13", 14" and 16" because when you've got a 22" bass drum, if you use an 18" floor tom, it's so low that the kicks start to not sound so deep. That's why I love that little 14" floor tom. For some reason, way back when they were designing these sets, they used to put 12", 13" and 16" with the 22" and it seemed that the jump between the 13" and 16" is very odd. The 14" is the best tom sound I have.

"As for muffling, I don't like foam rubber, which some people do like. In the old days, you used to put your wallet on the snare drum, but I don't like using kleenex and all of that because there's not enough substance. I've found two things to muffle and just take the edge off the overtones on toms. One is Gibson Guitar cloths, used to wax a guitar neck, which work really well because they fold up real nice and you can put them up on one end of the drum, out of your way. The other thing is baby diapers. The material has substance, and they're soft, and there's something different about

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Photo by Lissa Wales

"A LOT OF DRUMMERS, INCLUDING MYSELF, HATE IT WHEN WE GET A GREAT PATTERN IN THE STUDIO, AND THE WRITER SAYS, 'YA KNOW. . . .', AND YOU KNOW WHAT'S COMING. HE'S GOING TO SAY, 'WHY DON'T YOU PUT HALF YOUR DRUMS BACK IN THE CASES'—AND HE'S RIGHT."

SHOP OWNERS: On Opening

Michael Noto

Michael Noto's Music Store

Baton Rouge, Louisiana

Photo by M. Rupert Walden

In preparing for this article, I tried to determine various themes that would provide insight into each owner's unique experience of starting a drum shop. I examined the shops listed in Modern Drummer's *Percussion Industry Directory* to try to discern some patterns or trends. There are fifteen shops listed in California, fourteen in New York and eight in both Illinois and Pennsylvania. I noticed that some of the shops listed are not exclusive drum shops but handle other instruments as well. Of course that's okay but it did bring to mind some questions, such as "Just where can a drum shop survive? What type of environment is necessary? What factors are involved in influencing the nature of a given store?" My interview with Mike Noto shed some light on these questions. Noto's story is one of a drummer who started out with the desire to open a drum shop but, due to various circumstances, wound up becoming a more general music store with a heavy emphasis on drums. He acknowledges now that things probably worked out for the best as he has strong doubts that he would have been able to survive as a shop devoted strictly to drums. Noto was forced to alter his conception of the store "because I couldn't get anything else. I had to start out with something!" he laughed.

Noto, still in his mid-twenties, has played in the Baton Rouge area throughout his music career. He gained important experience working in a music store, which he did for a year while still playing full time. After a hectic schedule of working six days in the store and six nights a week in the club, he quit the music store, bought a boat and spent almost every day for the next three years in his boat. Noto finally tired of his demanding life of leisure and decided that he should do something to prepare for his future. He felt that his nightclub playing, although rewarding, was not a long-term occupation. Opening a music store was a natural step, as most of his work background was in music.

Mike Noto's Music Store is located in a small shopping center on Florida Street in Baton Rouge, a major thoroughfare on which are located many of the city's businesses, shopping malls and perhaps 90% of the music stores. The shop is about 2100 square feet in size and includes an area for storage and repairs. He handles several of the major and some mid-line makes of drums. Noto is the only dealer in town to carry North drums, a brand which he now plays himself. He believes that he is the only one that can get Gretch and Slingerland directly from the factory but added that anyone can "boot-leg" them.

Through Noto I learned that many music companies are selective and protective of who they sell to. which can make it very difficult for the "new kid on the block." "I'll tell you how I started." he began. "I started from a jobber. A jobber is what we call the little supplier; it's for drumsticks, guitar strings, picks, straps, drum heads, stuff" like that. That stuff is easy to get—all you have to do is be a business to start that. But. you can't keep a store going on just that! I don't care if all you sell is drum heads, you've got to have some major lines of drums for people to see; to attract them in there. I started oft with about six guitars and a cheap set of drums because I couldn't get any lines. I tried to be a drum shop to start off. You know, you can't just open up and get lines. It took a long time to get the lines I've got now. You have to have an established business location and, first of all. they have to see if there's a need. They don't want to just open you up if another store is right down the street. It's strictly up to the company. That's how they are though. Some big companies won't fool with you unless you've got other big companies. Well, how are you going to get the big companies if nobody will give them to you?"

Noto needed determination, persistence and a little ingenuity to obtain his first major line of drums. "It took me running him (the representative) down, trying to get ahold of him for three months. Really, they don't call you back. They don't care. They've got enough business. It took three months to track him down. I had to con his wife into giving me his phone number where he was at a convention, and I caught him in his hotel room. I told him, " I got people waiting on this stuff". Are you going to take my order or not?' And *finally,* he took my order. He said, 'Well, if your credit's good and everything, I'll send the order in and if it goes through, you should have them in eight weeks.' So I waited three months and eight weeks. People think you just jump in there and open a store. As long as you've got other companies, it's easy. But the first three or four are hard to get."

"Did you find that you had to have a lot of money to start with?" I asked. "I would say the initial deal was about $15,000. I started with about ten and

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a Drum Shop

by M. Rupert Walden

Photo by Rick Mattingly

Barry Greenspon
Drummers World
New York City

Barry Greenspon opened the doors of Drummers World in September 1979. It is exclusively a percussion center aimed at meeting drummer's needs. The nature of the shop is definitely influenced by its New York location. As Greenspon told me, "I try to diversify as much as possible. On one hand, we attract experienced symphonic percussionists looking for particular items, and on the other hand, kids come in who are buying their first pair of sticks. I feel as responsible to the beginner as to the pro."

Drummers World handles the major brands of drums and also some of the makes in the mid-line price range. Greenspon strives to keep up with the fast-moving percussion industry so that he can stock accordingly, but concedes that no matter how hard he tries, invariably someone will want just what he doesn't have. The store occupies about 1900 square feet which includes an area for repairs—a vital aspect of the business. "We do a lot of custom work, but besides that, I want our customers to know if we sell them a product and repairs are necessary, we can handle them!" he stated. Mail order is another integral facet of Greenspon's operation and he receives orders from all over the country, as well as, from Europe.

Greenspon is a native of Raleigh, North Carolina, who transplanted himself to New York to be in the unique musical environment of "the Big Apple." Educationally he has a degree in Music and in English. His playing experience encompasses various areas of drumming including small clubs, large halls, touring and recording. Greenspon considers himself very fortunate to be. perhaps, one of the few drummers who has had the privilege of studying first hand with Max Roach.

The transition from player to businessman was a rather natural one for Greenspon. He had done some selling in his father's clothing store, and had also worked in several music stores.

I commented that if someone had asked me to pick a place that didn't need another music store, New York would have been a likely choice. Greenspon explained that there are indeed a number of music stores, but only a few strictly percussion stores. There is an axiom that a sure path to success is to find a need and fill it. I asked him what his original perception of the need in that area had been. He responded that traveling to different parts of the country "impressed upon me the lack of personal service I received from music stores in New York. I would go into a store, say, in the midwest, and feel a certain personal concern I never felt in New York stores. Of course, the population in New York makes this quite natural, but after a while, this attitude became very frustrating to me. I began sensing the need in New York for a store dedicated to servicing the full-time pro as well as the kid who is just beginning. That nine or ten year-old kid who's just beginning has a lot of questions and nobody wants to take the time to answer those questions."

Greenspon made a pretty thorough analysis of music store ownership prior to making his own commitment. He spent about a year and a half in this process. Consequently, he has had few surprises since he was well-aware of what he was getting into, although he added that it's impossible to anticipate everything. He found visits to other music stores to be of limited benefit, as the owners were reluctant to discuss the ins and outs of the business.

Starting a drum shop is by no means a get-rich-quick scheme and Greenspon estimates that it takes about five years to really become firmly established. At this early phase of his store's development, he still relies primarily on his playing and teaching as a source of income and feels that this sort of financial security is important in building his business. "What I make in the store I put back into the store," he said. "I feel that's the way that my business will grow—and I like seeing it grow. If somebody's going to open a store and think that in a year they're going to clean up, they had better forget it. It takes a lot of patience."

After having made the decision to begin the store, the next step was to obtain money to get started. Greenspon continued: "I went to the bank, met and spoke with one of the officers, and after a few visits, applied for a loan. It isn't easy convincing a vice president of a bank to back you, but somehow he sensed my sincerity and, after signing my life away, they approved the application."

I asked what he had sought in a location site. He told me that most of the major music stores in New York are situated in a three block area, so finding a spot there was a logical choice. "In any type of retail business, your location is of utmost importance." he asserted. "The thing about New York is we get people from all over the world. I've had people from all countries coming into Drummers World and I'm sure a lot of it has to do with the New York location."

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Photo by Rick Mattingly

Johnny Roy

Johnny Roy's Drum Shop

Louisville, KY

Owned and operated by its namesake, Johnny Roy's Drum Shop is now comfortably settled into its third location in the past six years. The actual grand opening was in 1976, but Roy had been pondering the idea of a drum shop for quite a long time. Roy's store has expanded from 550 sq. feet in the first shop, to 1,000 in the second, to 3,400 in the current home. The additional floor space enables him to display from twelve to eighteen drum sets, ranging from basic three-piece sets on up to giant multi-tom outfits. Roy handles most of the major brands as well as a selection of drums in the mid-line range. He strives to carry a balanced inventory, including most of the special accessories that today's drummers look for.

Johnny Roy's musical career began at the ripe old age of six, when his father bought him a snare drum, which cost $13.50. Four years later, he recalls playing that drum with a drum and bugle corps at the New York World's Fair. From 1949 to 1960, Roy worked exclusively as a drummer, but in 1961, he began dividing his time between playing and teaching. During the '60s, he had his own jobbing band, and also worked as a contractor, hiring musicians for various acts and shows that came to Louisville.

I asked Roy to tell me about his first store, and he replied: "I really thought about it for, I guess, twenty years, finally deciding to do it in '76. I started with very little. I had my private teaching, so I thought I'd get a small place, have a couple of studios, maybe hire another teacher, and sell a few sticks and drumheads. I thought if I could get started that way, I'd just keep dumping the money back into it and make the inventory grow. The first shop was 550 sq. feet, and with two studios, we didn't have much room, but of course, we didn't have much merchandise either. The merchandise I started with consisted of fifty drumheads and a box of sticks. It was four or five months before I stocked my first drum set. Any money I made went into paying the overhead. I was living off of my teaching and playing. In other words, I continued doing what I had been doing, and let the store grow on its own merit."

Roy started his place small and let it grow naturally. He, like every other owner I spoke with, did not place himself in a position where he was totally dependent on the store for an income. "The reason that I could afford to do that [start small], was that I had my teaching going," he explained. "I had been teaching for years and I already had that student load built up. I was able to live off the teaching and playing, and just by adding a few hours onto my schedule, I could go ahead and open the drum shop. But just to open a shop and not have other activities to make money—I don't know how a person could do it. It would be most difficult."

Johnny Roy began his drum shop with a strong emphasis on the educational aspects of drumming, and that emphasis continues to this day. "Teaching is a big thing here. We've got quite a few students and I have two other drum teachers now, besides myself." He sounded very proud as he told me of the two percussion ensemble rooms that were recently completed and which he had plans to utilize as soon as possible. Throughout most of its history, Roy's shop has been exclusively for drummers, but he recently added a guitar teacher to the staff, and is now carrying some basic equipment for guitar players.

An important aspect of the business is repairs, most of which Roy does himself. Roy feels this area is important for any drum shop. "You can't do it all," he contends, "unless you have some really fine equipment. But with general hand tools, you can do most of it. We put on a lot of tom holders, spurs, and snare strainers, and do the general things like that."

Roy feels that his experience as a contractor and band leader helped with his transition from player to businessman. He had further developed his communication skills in his many years of conveying ideas to his students and dealing with their parents. With regard to the transition, Roy said, "Handling money for the items I was selling, and figuring out pricing to stay competitive with the other stores was new to me. I just take one thing at a time. If it's not working, I try something else. The transition was not hard for me, but I think it would be for someone who had not had the experience of, or the contact with, the general public that I'd had. So I had an advantage there."

Adding the role of store owner to the roles of player and teacher was not without its stresses. One of the adjustments concerned dealing with customers who know little about a product, but try to pretend that they do. "You must not belittle the patron who comes into your store, no matter how little he may know about the product." Another important adjustment Roy had to make concerned his own attitude about certain merchandise. "One of the hardest things I had to do when I first got into this was to start handling student-line products," he explained. "I want everything to be top-notch, and when you're handling a brand that doesn't have the quality of the established name brands, how do you go about selling that? You want to sell something with confidence, so you have to learn that there are other price ranges, and shop for the best thing within that price range. Then you can explain to the customer that this item is a very good product for the money. That was a tough thing for me, because I wanted everything to be the *best,* but you have to realize that the top-dollar item is not always the best for a particular patron who comes in your store."

Quality is something that Roy demands from any product he carries, no matter what brand or price range. When he was considering carrying a mid-priced line of drums, he decided to conduct a little experiment. He ordered one snare drum from the representative. "I took it into one of the studios the day it arrived and I beat the *daylights* out of it," he recalled, laughing. "I was surprised at how well it withstood the punishment I

continued on page 110

Mo Mahoney

The Drum Shop

Las Vegas, NV

Photo by Wayne C. Kodey

Mo Mahoney is the "old timer" of the four drum shop owners I spoke with in the sense that he has been open longer than the other three combined, having opened in 1962. in a store of about 400 square feet. Mahoney has moved several times in the intervening years and is now located in his own building of some 6.000 square feet. With regard to his various moves, he said that he was always on the lookout for bigger locations and low rent. Mahoney's place has grown from a drum shop into a full-fledged music store. "We carry everything: tympani, chimes, marimbas, vibes, all of it."

He has a total of fifteen staff members—four in the percussion area. Many of his employees are former customers. When hiring people for the drum department. Mahoney looks for three qualities: if they play drums: if they are good with their hands in terms of repairs: and thirdly, if they have developed a measure of respect from their peers, because then he finds that it is easier for them to get into the selling end of the business.

Mahoney's son, Marti, is now carrying on the tradition begun by his father. He is in charge of the drum department and has developed a reputation for his studio work and his skills in tuning for various sounds in a recording situation. Mahoney said with a typical father's pride, "He's doing a super job."

Repairs, which Mahoney used to do himself, are an important aspect of the store. However he noted a difference in his customers' attitudes about getting things repaired. "It's important to have," he said, "but it seems less and less people tend to need repairs. Rather, they just buy new stuff. If a pedal breaks down, rather than get it fixed, they buy a new one." Teaching is important too and four instructors handle around 100 students weekly.

Mahoney is originally from New York and started playing the drums after he finished high school. Mahoney gigged around New York for a while and in 1954 decided to go to Las Vegas to see what was happening there. He went right to work and has been there ever since. He described himself as "a typical all-around commercial drummer" and has worked with show bands, small jazz groups, and backing various acts and singers.

I asked Mahoney about the motivating factors for opening the shop. "There was no place in town that had the right equipment," he recalled. "You know, you couldn't get the right size sticks or the right heads and all that. So it was hard to get what you needed—that's why I started. Also, I always loved drum shops since I was a kid and I patterned my shop after shops like The Professional Drum Shop in Los Angeles and Frank Wolf's Drum Shop in New York."

Making the transition to a full-time owner was smooth for Mahoney as he continued his active playing until 1970. He stated. "It came easy because I had already had eight years experience while I was playing. I had eight years experience as a businessman so I learned through the school of hard knocks. There are easier ways. I'm sure. I wish I had gone to college and learned something about business. It would have been a lot better for me."

Mahoney estimates that it takes about four or five years for a new shop to really get on its feet. He added that you need something else on the side to help you financially "unless you have a lot of money and can start right off with enough inventory to where you can sell enough to make a living at it. If you can't do that then you're better off to keep working. I reinvested all the profits from the store and just lived out of my musician's salary for eight years. I didn't take a salary and I even bought my own equipment. You have to unless you have a rich father who can give you the money to get started. That's the only way to do it."

Mahoney expressed some definite ideas about the factors necessary for a successful drum shop. "The main thing is to have a good inventory," he asserted. "Have everything that's needed. Have all the sizes of drumsticks, have all kinds of heads, have a good supply of drumsets, and lots of cymbals. Also, give good service. Get people to like your store because they were treated properly. Then they have a nice feeling so they want to come back to you rather than to the guy down the street."

When I asked him about what he has found to be the best advertisement, his reply was quick and succinct: "Word of mouth is best!" He has also sponsored a number of clinics in the store. His guest artists have included Buddy Rich. Louie Bellson. Roy Burns, Alan Dawson. Billy Cobham and Don Osborne, Jr.

Some eight years ago Mahoney had to face a severe challenge, a challenge that almost destroyed his business. Within a two-year period his sales dropped by around 75%. This occurred at a time when he had built up a tremendous drum inventory. At one point, he even had seven new sets of tympani *in stock.* The problem? "Las Vegas went through a whole change of entertainment about that time. They did away with the lounges, so they didn't have any lounge groups, which cut down the amount of sales." he said. "Before that time, they would have like four groups working in every lounge, plus a relief group. So there was like one drummer in the show room and five drummers in the lounge. They cut it down with about twelve hotels, so you can see what that did to it." (I haven't gotten out my calculator but with twelve hotels, that's a bunch of working drummers in one town!) This all closed down in a span of two years and the lounges discontinued entirely. The lounges have opened up a little since then, but it is nothing like it used to be. The solution? Mahoney was literally forced to become a full music store purely as a matter of survival. He had never contemplated such a move before.

Mahoney does a good deal of business with the local high schools and colleges, which is a unique situation for the owners that I spoke with. Johnny Roy mentioned that he had considered this as a possible avenue of doing business in the

continued on page 110

MD's Fourth Annual Readers Poll Results

HALL OF FAME

KEITH MOON

PAST HALL OF FAME WINNERS:
1979—Gene Krupa
1980—Buddy Rich
1981—John Bonham

JAZZ DRUMMER

BUDDY RICH

2. BILLY COBHAM
3. LOUIS BELLSON

Photo by Rick Malkin

BIG BAND

BUDDY RICH

2. LOUIS BELLSON
3. ED SHAUGHNESSY

Photo by Karen Larcombe

ROCK DRUMMER

NEIL PEART

2. STEVE SMITH
3. STEWART COPELAND

RECORDED PERFORMANCE

NEIL PEART:

Rush, *Exit: Stage Left*

2. BILL BRUFORD:
King Crimson, Discipline
3. STEWART COPELAND:
Police, *Ghost In The Machine*

PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTALIST

NEIL PEART

2. RALPH MACDONALD
3. CARL PALMER/ NANA VASCONCELOS

STUDIO DRUMMER

STEVE GADD

2. SIMON PHILLIPS
3. JIM KELTNER

Photo by Tom Copi

ALL-AROUND DRUMMER

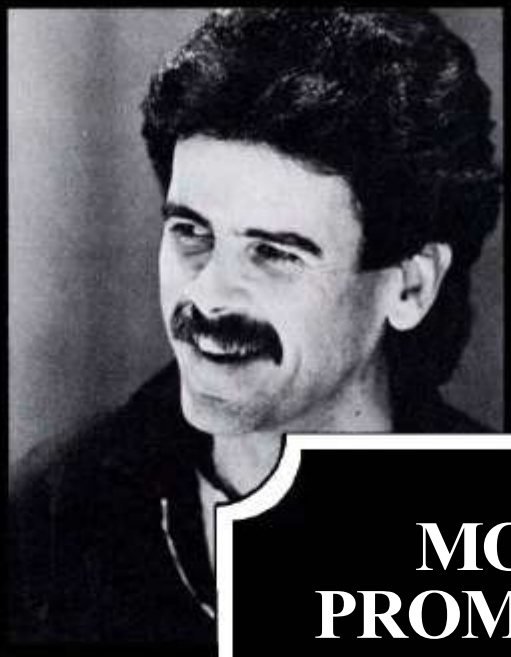
STEVE GADD

2. NEIL PEART
3. BILLY COBHAM

R&B DRUMMER

DAVID GARIBALDI

2. HARVEY MASON
3. BERNARD PURDIE



MOST PROMISING NEW DRUMMER

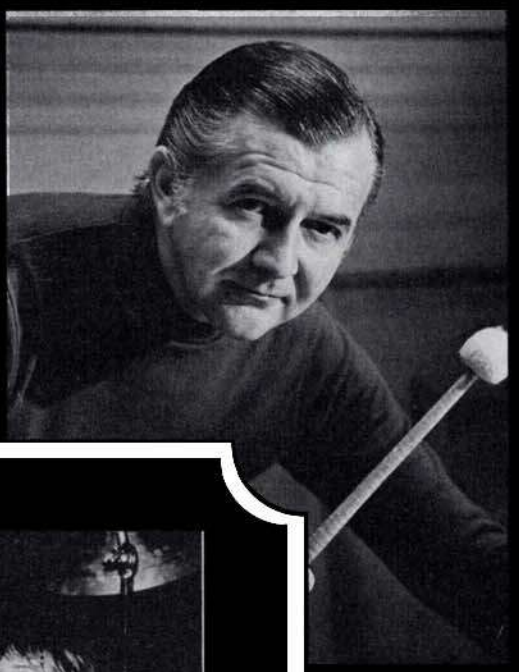
STEWART COPELAND

2. ROD MORGENSTEIN
3. SIMON PHILLIPS

LATIN-AMERICAN PERCUSSION

AIRTO

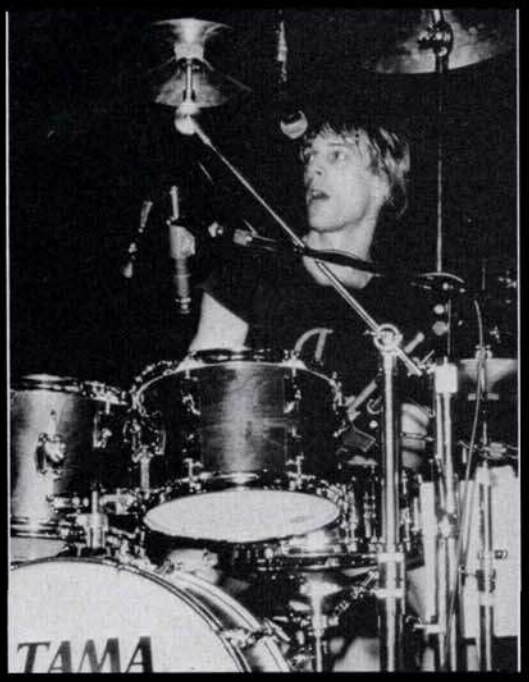
2. RALPH MACDONALD
3. TITO PUENTE

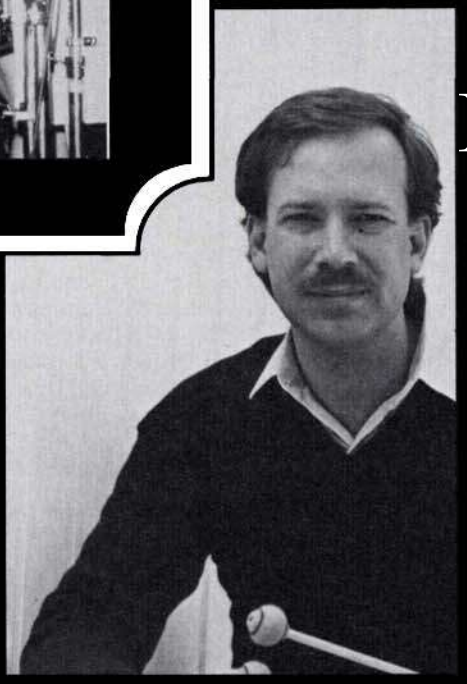


CLASSICAL

VIC FIRTH

2. CARL PALMER
3. SAUL GOODMAN





MALLET PERCUSSION

GARY BURTON

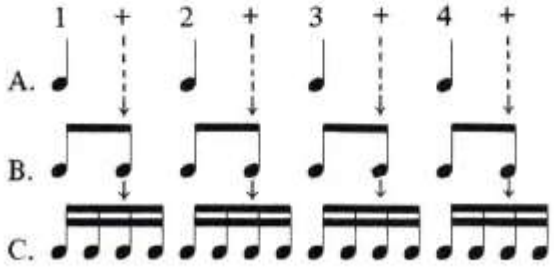
2. VIC FIRTH/ DAVID SAMUELS
3. LIONEL HAMPTON

by Nick Forte

Sixteenth Notes

One sixteenth note has the value of one fourth of one quarter note, and one half of an eighth note. In 4/4 a group of four sixteenth notes would equal one beat. In example #1 these three note values are illustrated in the form of a chart. They are "stacked" one over the other so as to aid in the visualization of the relative position and duration of each note.

Ex. #1

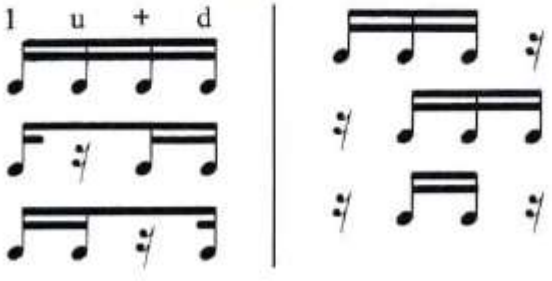


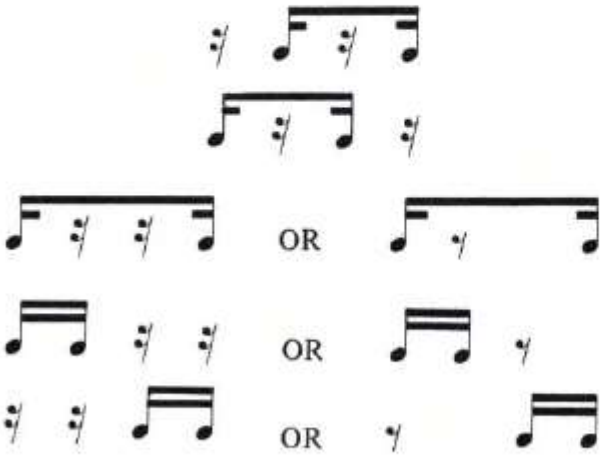
You will notice, on line "C" Ex. #1, that some of the notes do not have a "count" above them. While there are counts for these notes, I have ommitted them in Ex. #1. This gives me an opportunity, here, to discuss the counting of sixteenth notes. Over the years there have evolved several different ways to count the remaining sixteenths. Some drummers were taught to say: 1 e + a, while others were taught to say: 1 e an duh. and still others may have learned some other variation. The important things is: the numbers and the an's (+) are always in the same position. If, however, you have never learned to count sixteenths at all, I recommend the following: 1 uh an duh. The uh has the sound of a small a. In writing these lessons. I abbreviate this with: 1 u + d: but the sound is the same. At this point I would suggest that you practice Ex. #1. A to C. Repeat the cycle a few times without stopping between bars.

Sixteenth Note Groupings

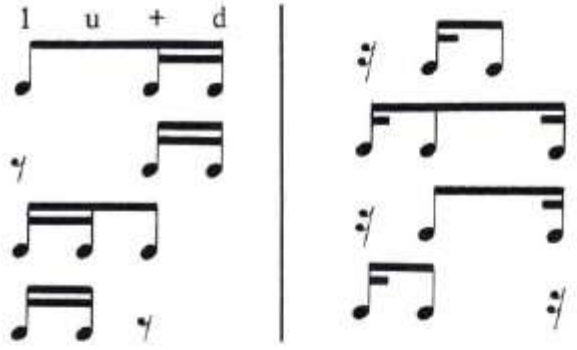
It is wise to become familiar with the many ways sixteenths are written. In Ex. #2 I have listed the most common groupings. Try to memorize each group. This will be an enormous help when you begin practicing the snare drum reading material.

Ex. *#2*





Sixteenths with Eighths



THE TIE

A tie is a small curved line that connects two notes, in order for those two notes to sound like one note of larger value. The second note (the note that the tie goes to) is *not* struck: rather, that note (and its duration) is considered an "extension" of the first note's value. Theoretically, any two notes could be tied; however, if ties are used, they most often appear from the "+" of 2 to the third beat, and from the "+" of four to the first beat.

When two notes of a longer duration are tied, the tied note is. in effect, a token note. On the snare, and especially at slower tempi (because of the speed at which a single note decays), the tied note is not really heard. In order for a drummer to "simulate" an extended tone on the snare drum, he must use the roll. More on the Roll in lesson #4.

continued on page 40

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Bill Curtis
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Graham Edge
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Geoff Eyre
Barry Frost
James.E. Gadson
Jim Ganduglia
Ty Grimes
John Guerin
Bobbye Hall
Dave Hanlon
John Hartman
Kat Hendriske
Jim Keltner
Keith Knudsen
Russ Kunkel
Willie Leacox
Paul Leim
Andre Lewis
Larrie Londin
Derek Longmuir
Shep Lonsdale
Ralph MacDonald
Gary Mallaber
Ed Mann
Shelly Manne
Jerry Marotta
Rick Marotta
Chet McCracken
Allen Meyers
James Monroe
Barry Morgan
Mark Morris
Cubby O'Brien
Derek Pellicci
Jeff Porcaro
Raymond Pounds
Dan Pucillo
Dave Robinson
Terril Santiel
Steve Schaeffer
Adam Shendal
Alan Schwartzberg
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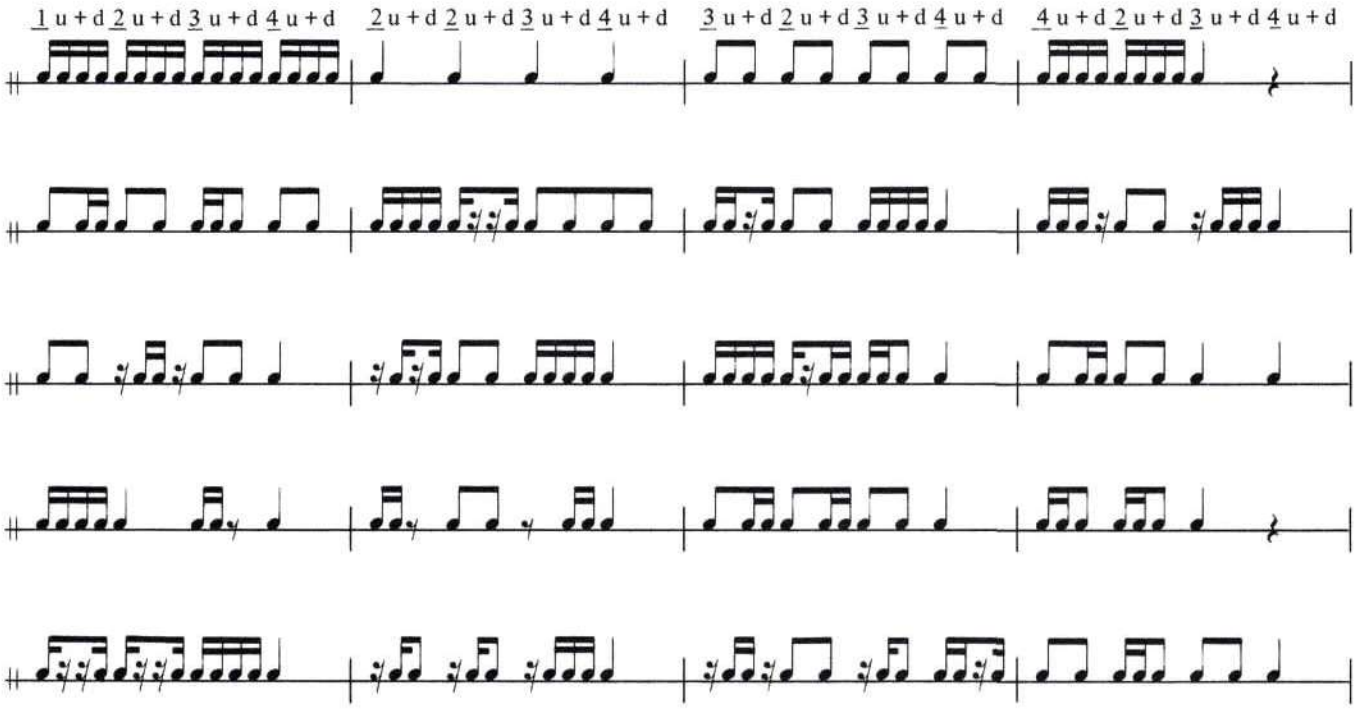
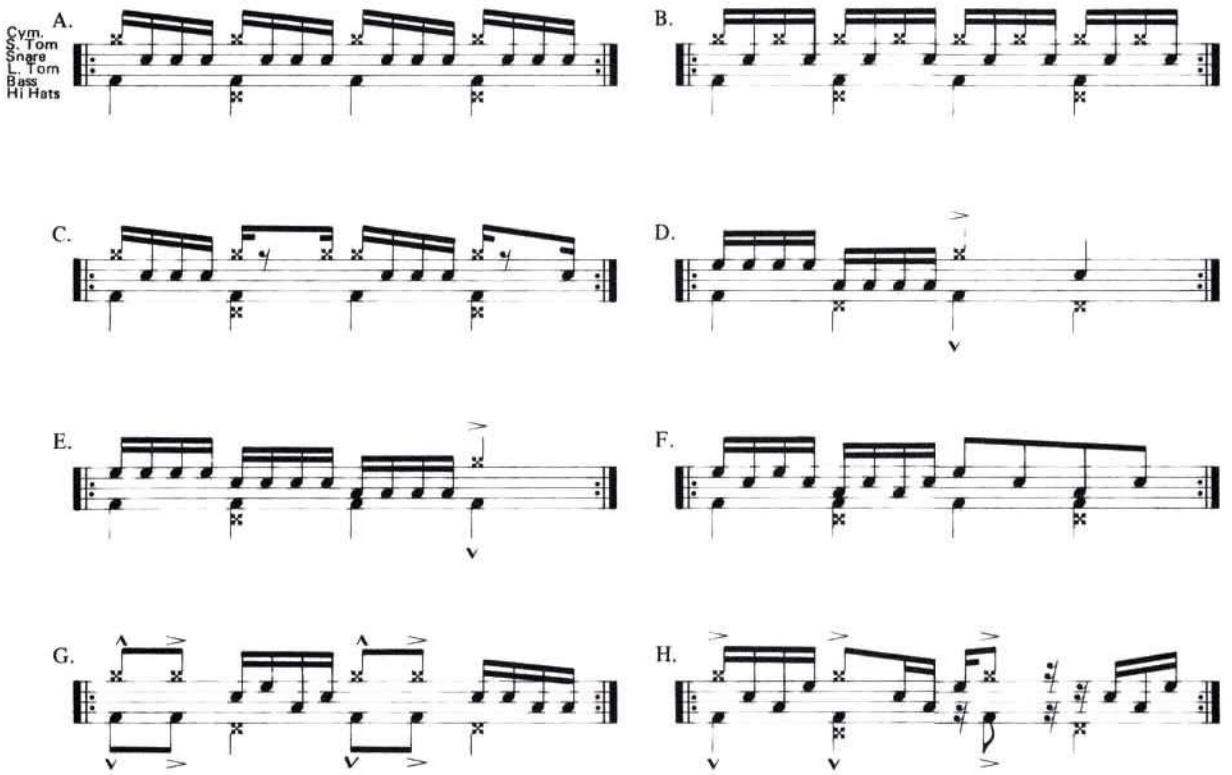
SNARE DRUM READING

Note: After the placement, counting, and timing of the sixteenth notes becomes a matter of routine, the counts that do not relate to a specific note may be dropped. However, continue to count anything that falls on a number.

DRUM SET EXERCISES

Note: While most of these exercises may be played hand to hand, some of them may be played with sticking variations. i.e.: Letter A could be: RLLL. Letter D could be: RRLL. Experiment!

continued on page 42

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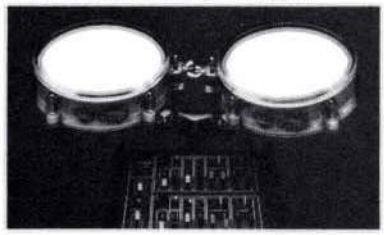

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(Calif. residents add 6% sales tax)			
Total (Prices above include freight.)			

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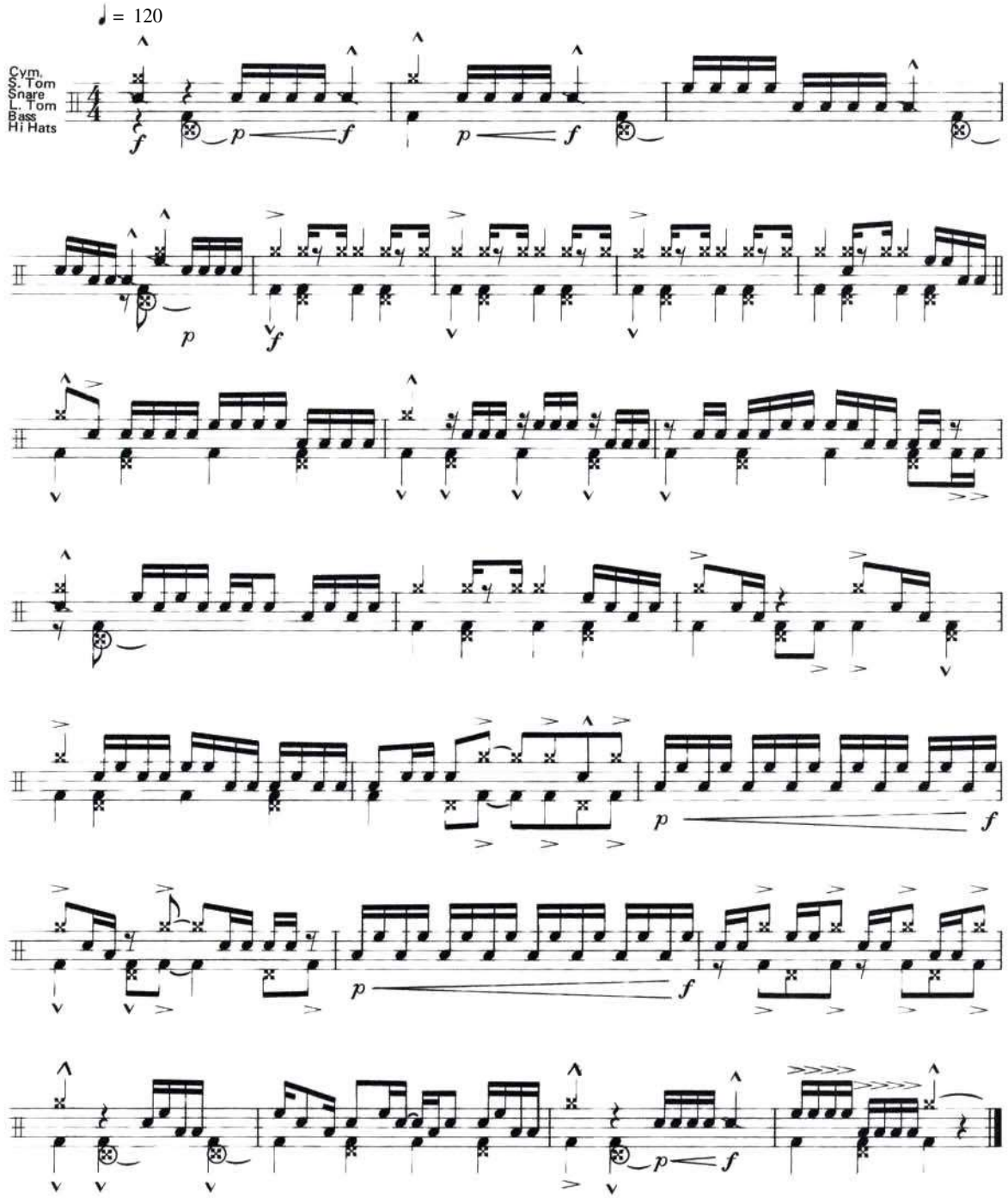
= rim shot

= foot crash

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by Cheech Iero

Chris Parker:

A Day In The Life of a Studio Drummer

Photo by Ross Gadye

Ever wonder what an average day is like in the life of a studio drummer? MD thought it might be interesting to spend a full day with Chris Parker, one of New York's busiest session players, to get a feel for the lifestyle of an unsung hero of the music biz. This particular day means waking at 7:30 AM, after an extra-late recording session the night before. On the agenda for today? Two commercials, a record date and a live gig at night.

9:00 AM: I meet Chris on this brisk winter morning in front of the Graybar Building at Lexington and 44th, and we take the elevator to the Howard Swartz Studios for the first jingle of the day: a Shield soap commercial.

Chris greets arranger-keyboardist John Silverman of AdverTunes as the other musicians enter the studio. In an attempt to quiet the drums, the oak floor of the studio is covered with a thick shag carpet before the five-piece Slingerland studio kit is set up. Since this is a 30-second spot, Chris has to play with a click track. The timing has to be perfect. Silverman reaches through the Sennheisers which mike the toms and hands Chris a piece of manuscript with bar lines and chords written in.

"Can you make out what's going on? Listen to the playback of the demo tape. You'll catch the groove," comes a voice from the control booth.

The demo tape, consisting of vocals and piano, is played. Chris picks up the groove and begins to play the funky rhythms on his thigh. He runs it down a few times with the piano, bass and guitar. Things are beginning to fall into place, though Chris feels the time is gradually getting faster than the click track. The others feel the same and they run it down several more times. Finally, they're ready for the first take. Many takes later, they listen to the playback. Harvey Hoffman of AdverTunes asks Chris to double up the feel on the hi-hat in the beginning of the tune to create more of a bounce. At various times, while the producer and engineers are discussing some technical aspect, the musicians begin playing the tune with different feels: bop, an r & b groove, then a cha-cha. This releases tension, and helps them feel more at ease with the original concept.

Four more attempts and Silverman asks the bass player to "pop" the introductory notes more. Make them more staccato." Chris counts it off again and they play the tune four more times. The producer comes out of the control room to further discuss the drum part. He's changed his mind.

"Try to keep the front part more open, and double the hi-hat in the middle."

Chris quickly pencils in some notes on his music and they try it again.

"It's almost there. Let's make it brighter."

The guitar player asks for more drums in his earphones. Chris counts it off and they play it once more. It's the thirty-seventh playing.

Parker looks through the glass-topped baffles surrounding the drum booth towards the control room for a sign of acceptance. Everyone quietly listens to the playback.

"That's got it! Thanks fellas."

Chris Parker's climb to the top of the New York heap began to gain momentum after meeting musicians Will Lee, Don Grolnick and Steve Kahn, an association which later led to the forming of the Carmine Street Band.

"Will kept trying to shoot me in on things. In fact, he did shoot me into a lot of studio things that I wasn't ready for. especially jingles. It was a real pressure thing, and your reading really had to be together. Well, my reading wasn't together at all. I wasn't ready for it. In a way, it was good that it happened because it really made me get my chops together. During the day, I'd stay home and woodshed.

"One day I ran into Steve Gadd. He was playing with Steve Marcus, Don Grolnick and Steve Kahn at Max's Kansas City. We started talking and we agreed that it would be nice to have a variety of things to do. I said, 'Look, I'm playing this r & b thing and we could trade off.' I was also playing with the Brecker Brothers at that time, and I said. 'You do the r & b gig, I'll do the Brecker Brothers, and we'll switch off.' " Parker and Gadd set their plan into action and even took it a step further by meshing both their talents into Stuff's sound. The rest, as they say, is history.

"People would come up to Mikells to hear me play and then they'd take a chance on me in the studio. What I couldn't fake, I'd figure out some other way. I'd do anything to give them what they wanted. That's the bottom line—results.

"They're not really looking over your shoulder to see if you're playing all the right notes. But they *do* want it to groove. They want it to sound right. And you have to have your reading together to a point where you're comfortable with it, and so you can take it beyond what's written. You play what's written the first time down and then either ask. or throw in something different if you have an idea. The arranger knows what he wrote and when he hears it back with some polish on it, well, then they'll call you back. It's a very slow process. It's only now. nine years later, that I'm so busy. I'm turning down stuff. Now I don't feel intimidated by a five-page chart."

1:00 PM: We arrive early for the next session at A & R Studios. This is a 60-second radio spot for Hecht's Department Store. The producer is eating a sandwich in the control room as he kids over the talkback with guitarist David Spinozza. Parker enters the drum booth, digs into his leather bag and immediately goes to work with the engineer to get a drum sound. The highest pitched tom-tom gives them some difficulty. Both Chris and the engineer agree it sounds "dull." After some tensioning of the bottom head, they soon find what they're looking for. The producer explains he wants a "Beach Boys' sound" at about M.M. 106. Charts are passed out. Chris looks it over, listens to the tempo of the click track through the cans, and is ready to give it a go. They play it through twice and the producer asks Chris and percussionist Crusher Bennett to give him more dynamics on the fourth beat of the bar. which repeats the hook of the tune. They play it again. It's time for the first take and the musicians get into it. During the break, the producer requests that the keyboard player play the legato section "as big as a house." and asks Chris to play "little tinkle sounds" on the cymbals. Another take. The assistant engineer is sent from the control room to make adjustments on the Shure *SM57* which mikes the hi-hats and snare drum. Chris asks if the AKG can be moved back because it's in his way. The problem is corrected by the assistant engineer. Parker gives the downbeat. They play it again.

"Insert a fill leading into the eleventh measure. I need a more definite change in feel," requests the producer.

Chris pencils in "fill" on his part and counts it off again. Four bars into the music, and a voice comes from the control room.

"I'd like to request a tune-up and an oil change." The band tunes up. Count off. Again, the voice. Two more times, straight through.

"They both sounded great. We could probably go with either one."

Parker reaches for his leather bag. The session is over and it's time to hit the streets of Manhattan once again.

We walk briskly down 8th Avenue to 52nd Street and up the steps of the Musicians Local 802 Headquarters where Chris picks up a handful of checks for previous sessions. From here, it's on to The Possible 20, a restaurant/night club owned by a group of some twenty studio musicians. Chris and I grab a table towards the back for a quick bite. We're soon joined by Blues Brothers' drummer Steve Jordan. The conversation revolves around drums and music, of course, and though one wants to linger, there's really no time. Chris rises, slings his cymbal bag over his shoulder and quickly heads for the exit. It's off to the Power Station to lay down tracks.

4:00 PM: *Saturday Night Live* musical director Paul Shaffer meets us in the lobby. He's playing keyboards on the date. The studio drums are not in a booth, nor are they surrounded by baffles. The engineer is obviously attempting to make the most of the ambience which Studio A offers. He's going for a big drum sound. The toms are miked from the top with Sennheiser *421's.* AKG *C45's* crisscross the top of the kit. The snare is miked top and bottom with Shure SM81's.

Chris takes a seat behind the drums. His leather bag slumps to the floor. Producer Lou DelGatto hands out charts while singer Leslie Pearl plays a demo tape on a cassette recorder. It's a catchy little MOR tune she's written entitled, "You Never Gave Up On Me." Chris watches his music as the song plays.

"What do you want me to play on the first four bars?"

"Just play time on the hi-hat. We're going to overdub a guitar part later and erase the hi-hat."

They run the tune down twice. Suggestions are passed back and forth between artist, producer and musicians until the tune is restructured. The first take sounds great. Leslie thinks they should go for a second because the tempo should have been a little slower. The second take is right on as Leslie and Lou head for the control room to listen to the playback. The tempo is perfect. It's on to the next tune.

Again, they listen to the demo cassette and talk over their individual musical roles. Alterations are made. Changes are pencilled in. They play the tune several times and put it on tape. After the third take, Leslie requests the bassist, "put a little more energy into the second verse. It lacks drive."

Fourth try. The musicians are stopped by the engineer's voice. Technical adjustment. Fifth take. Everyone heads for the control room to listen to the playback. Parker remains seated.

"If I go into the control room to hear each playback, I become conscious of how hard I'm playing the bass drum, or the sound of the cross sticking against the rim of the snare. I'll find myself concentrating too much on the sound, and not enough on the feel of the tune."

After a minor discussion in the control room, it's back for a sixth attempt. Leslie feels confident this will be the take. It is.

The music for the next tune is quickly distributed. No cassette demo this time. The first couple of takes are examined and DelGatto tells Parker to "lay back on the beat more." Another take and Leslie tells the producer she liked it better the first time. "Back to the ink," says DelGatto, a term meaning "forget the pencil notations and go back to the original chart." Three more times, and another listen to the playback. Both artist and producer head for the lobby for a

continued on next page

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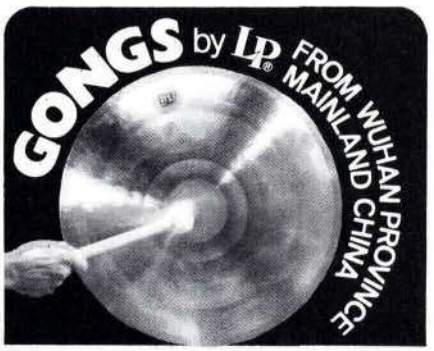
quick discussion. The musicians wait. Pianist Shaffer breaks the silence by playing the theme song from *Leave It To Beaver.* DelGatto re-enters the studio.

"Okay, we liked the last one, but we're going to try it again, just a little faster so we can have a choice of two tempos when we go to mix." Two more playings, and the date is over.

The session has run a bit over and there's little time to spare. We hail a cab which rushes us downtown to 7th Avenue South. This is a 7:30 soundcheck for a date Chris will play this evening with jazz trumpeter. Jon Faddis. We arrive at the club on time and fine adjustments are made to the drums, which have been shipped and set-up by a city musical transport service. After twenty minutes of soundcheck, the musicians run through parts of a few tunes. The whole thing takes an hour, after which Chris heads home for a change and an hour of relaxation before the 10:00 show.

10:00 PM: We return to the club shortly before ten to find a capacity crowd. It's a jazz gig. which, after a full day of pressure-cooker situations, restraint and catering to the whims of others, is a welcome release. The band is cooking. One fiery, inspired solo follows another. By the last set, it's Chris' chance to solo. His ideas are set up, developed and expanded as he appears to grow an extra pair of hands before your very eyes. The solo reaches a climactic explosion. The audience is up on its feet. After reaching such a musical peak, there's really nothing left to do but end the set—and another long Chris Parker day. It's 2:00 AM and time to head home to catch some sleep before tomorrow's 8:30 jingle call and another full day. We stop at a small out-of-the-way coffee shop where Chris begins to unwind from it all. I ask Chris if the trials and tribulations of being a dedicated musician ever make him question his career.

"Just last night. I was saying to myself. 'I should be doing something else.' A session I did the other day wasn't all it should have been. I got very frustrated trying to make it happen. You run into stuff like that every day. It's a different situation every day. It's the same thing that makes it rewarding. Rising to the challenge, meeting it head-on, and knocking the hell out of it. If you're putting everything you've got into it, and it's still not getting off the ground, you start to feel responsible. And you *are* responsible. If the drums aren't happening, no one else can do anything that's going to sound hip. The drums have got to be there. I was trying a lot of different things to make it happen, and it wasn't happening. You come out feeling, 'maybe I should be in another business.' But the next date was kicks. It was together. They only wanted two tunes. The charts were good, the players were good, and everyone was into it. I went home and slept well. When I was twenty-three, I used to say, 'A couple of more years and I'll be able to coast on up. I won't be running into problems like this anymore.' But you run into problems like this everywhere. You've just got to learn to deal with them. You'll always have your ups and downs. You've got to take it as it comes, and be ready for the opportunity when it knocks."



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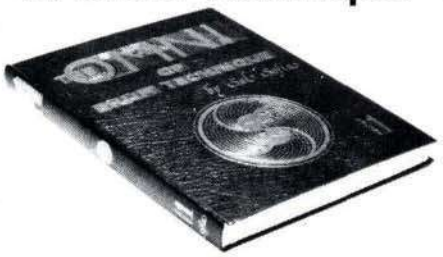

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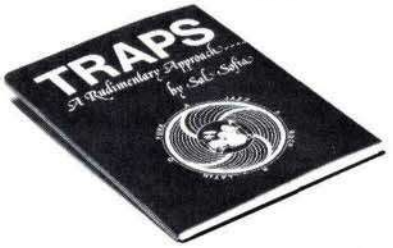

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Roach *continued from page 13*

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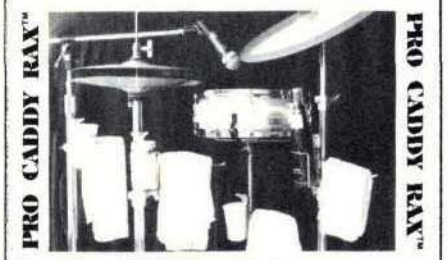

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dealing with rock. Anything they want. Writing for film. They are able to deal with contemporary things so that when they come out of school, if they don't get a job teaching or they don't want to teach, or, if they can't get a job in an orchestra or something like that ... I find graduate music students who are teaching in gymnastic schools! They've got a Master's in music. That's because they're waiting for somebody to retire in an orchestra or die, or waiting for a teaching job. They don't do *that,* and they haven't been prepared to deal with any kind of improvisational or contemporary music.

So, I would want a student to be prepared to do all those things. If he wants to play for an orchestra—he can! If he wants to play with a big band—he can! If he wants to get a job with a rock group—he can! If he wants to get a job with a straight-ahead group or if he wants to write. I believe *strongly* in drummers dealing with the compositional aspect of music. I think they will bring something new and fresh to composition because of the way they come to their instruments. The way they respond to the music by way of the instruments will bring some new ideas and new forms to what composition is about. Heretofore, all the composers have been pianists and people who played instruments of determinate pitch. They've always been the order of the day.

Of course, in order for a percussionist—a "drummer" if you will—to deal with composition, they have to also deal with instruments of determinant pitch, keyboard harmony, and all the essential things to writing music, which are the rules to improvisation as well. I find that some of the best drummers write a lot of their own music. Al Mouzon, Tony Williams, and then I go back to Louis Bellson, for example, a very fine orchestrator of things; like a composer. I go back to Kenny Clarke! The first record I heard of Kenny Clarke was an old Edgar Hayes 1938 recording where Kenny played vibraphone. He didn't play drums; he was a vibraphonist. Art Blakey was a pianist. Papa Jo plays piano. Philly Joe Jones writes good things for big band. He plays piano. I think it all helps. So a student with me would have to go through all of that, not just the drumset itself.

SF: Do you teach privately now?

MR: I don't teach any percussion up at U. of M. Dr. Peter Tanner teaches percussion. Sometimes he'll introduce me to a student who is really interested in this area of the instrument and I'll take that student on. I do a lot with the students as far as time is concerned. In *any* time signature, but basic time, breathing, and shading. I don't teach technique. If you really want to strengthen your wrists and your feet and all these kind of things—that's just hours. The students have to deal with that themselves. You can tell a student he has to put the hours in to get fast hands. It's just hard work. Singles and doubles predominantly. Just doing it!

Independence was first introduced to me by Baby Dodds. He would play quarter notes on the bass drum, shuffle rhythm with the left hand, Charleston on the hi-hat, and the chit-ta-chang swing beat with the right hand. He played all those things at one time, and *that* was swing and independence. When we started dealing with a group of musicians who came from Africa, dancers and drummers, in the *early* Forties, that's where I became aware of two against three. Because the basic hand drum beat is two against three. I realized that when I did that research trip in Ghana. Everything's based on two against three. When you play two against three on the conga drum, that's the basic beat. Independence has *always* been there. Baby Dodds and on up—we've always expressed it.

SF: When you came up, the bebop school of drumming was a reflection of that era in the U.S. Do you think it's possible for someone like myself—and I'm 30 years old—to learn to play that style?

MR: Yeah, if you would deal with the music. If you played the music of that period you would lean into that. It's just like if you sat in with the Basie band. There's a certain way that music takes you. There are certain things that you would do automatically with the Basie band. It's the same thing if you would play Charlie Parker's music. I never considered myself a bebop musician, because I was a sideman working with Dizzy and Bird. I really didn't start dealing with myself *musically* until I started having my own groups, writing my own music, and designing things that I coul d deal with. If you notice, I never did extended solos until I got my own groups. With Charlie Parker I played four bars in exchange, or maybe played an eight bar bridge and that was it! Then, the only thing was the so-called "front line." The horns were the front line and the drummer was like the nigger of the band. He was the guy who was always waiting, and then when he did play an extended solo, everybody would go off the stage and leave him up there. It didn't become musical until the front line came back. I resented all that.

SF: Did you ever make that known?

MR: Of course! I'd tell the front line, 'You know, I'm *breaking my back* accompanying you folks, and then when I play a solo, an *extended* solo, which is usually *once* a week, everybody just lays out! Why can't you accompany me as

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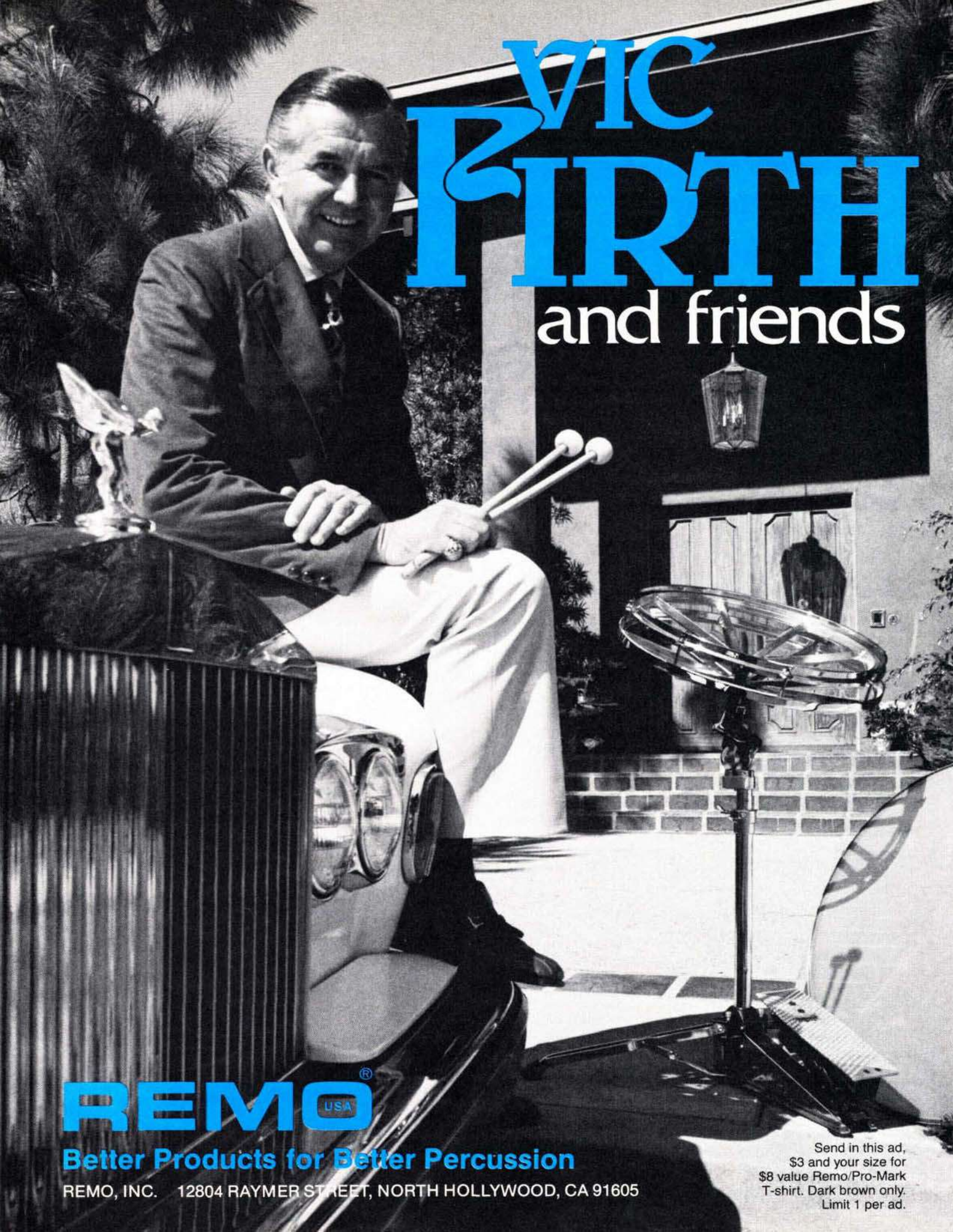

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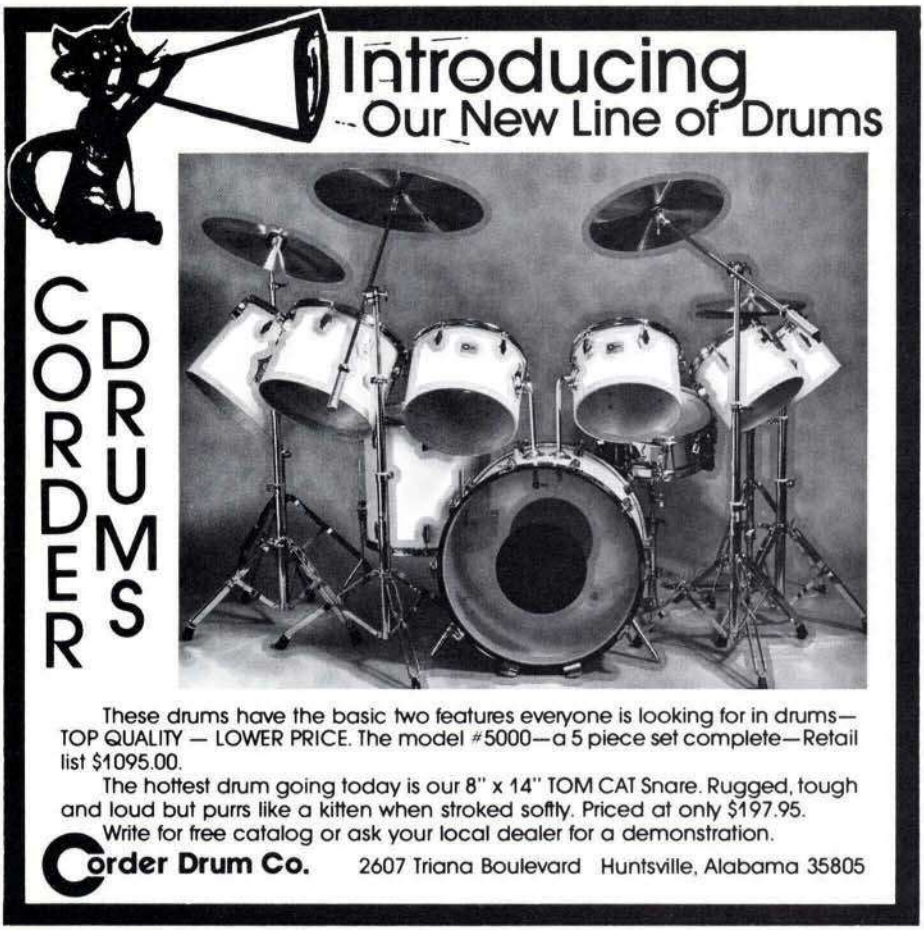

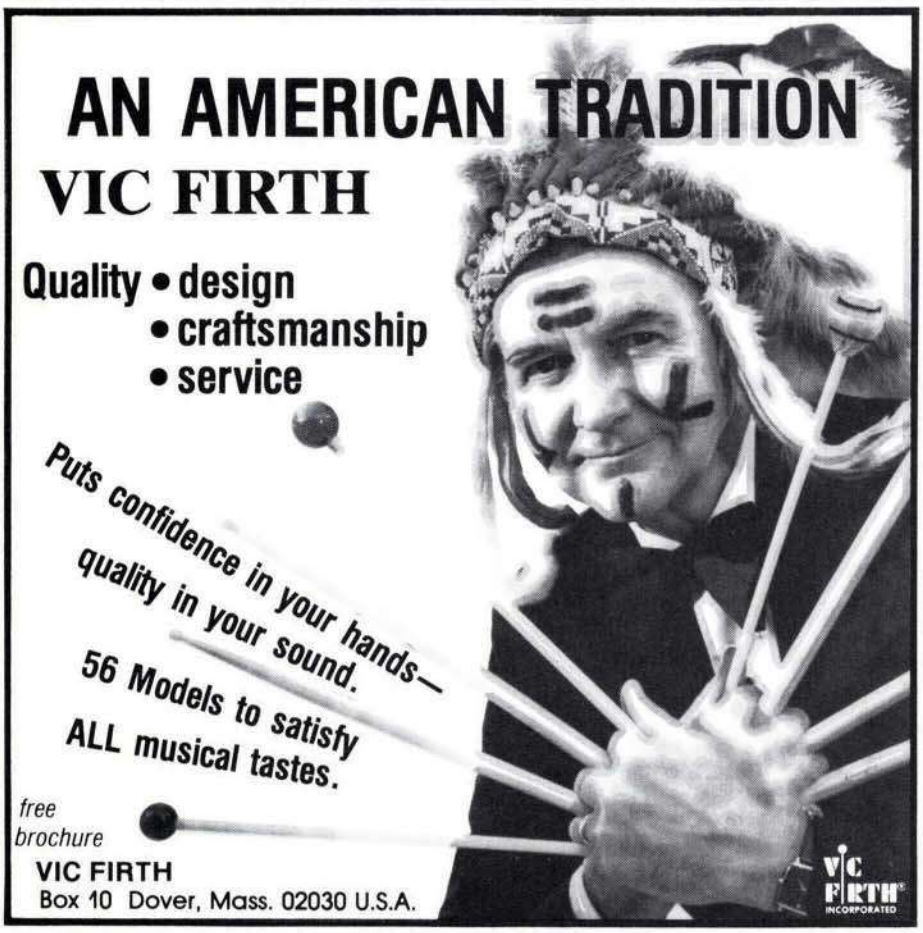

well? Can't you think of something to do with me?" They told me to write it. They said, "Write it out and we'll do it." And that's what I did.

SF: Couldn't they hear?

MR: No, because nobody had set any precedents as to how the horns should accompany rhythm. Even today, when I did the record with Anthony Braxton—he just did it automatically. He would imitate a bass drum, and play in the high register of the horn, just keep quarter time, or he would just play things behind me. I would just rattle all through it.

SF: You were the first person to play drum solos with bass accompaniment, right?

MR: Yeah. When I did my album *It's Time,* I wrote some things, but basically I think it should be an improvisational attitude. When drummers are playing, horn players should color the way we color behind them! It's always been like that. To me, it's a matter of imagination and it also has something to do with humility. Drummers have a great deal of humility in order to stay underneath somebody all that time, and give them support constantly, and get little reward for it.

I notice in the history books, when they talk about new trends and things that happened, they say, "This is the period of Dizzy Gillespie and Charlie Parker; This is the period of Miles Davis; This is the period of Louis Armstrong. They never say anything about the drummers! Now this is the period of fusion. They say this is the period of rock. But, you know, for every one of those things, the reason that there is a change is *rhythmic things.* It has nothing to do with the horns! They're still going from C to F, or just doing an A minor mode or whatever it is! This is where they are *basically.* So, the *rhythm* changed!

SF: What was going on during the transition period when you were playing with Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie? Did it change your melodic concept?

MR: No, No. When I first came on 52nd St., I was playing piano. I played drums as well, but I'd get calls sometimes to play piano.

SF: Are there any recordings of you on piano?

MR: No. I never made any albums. I wouldn't dare. Lately I have been doing some things. In Europe if I record I play some piano. I've done that on my latest album. But, you know, when you work with people like Bud Powell and Art Tatum you just don't deal with it because you hear and see what can be done with the instrument. With me it was just that at the time they needed a pianist and that was that.

SF: A drum teacher/author told me that Dizzy Gillespie was largely responsible

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for what the bebop drummers were playing.

MR: That's not true. The people who were responsible for me playing what I played on drums were Chick Webb, Sidney Catlett . . . not horn players or pianists. They don't know anything about the instrument! Let's get that together. The people I listened to in order to learn how to play this instrument were Chick Webb, Sidney Catlett. the Kenny Clarkes, the O'Neil Spencers, these folks. That's where I learned how to play this instrument. *Not* from Dizzy Gillespie *or* from Miles Davis or anybody else!

SF: I've never heard O'Neil Spencer play.

MR: He was a magician with brushes.

SF: There are not many recordings of him.

MR: Yeah, but you know in those days the recording industry always messed up the drummer in the back. This was really . . . what do you call it … cultural discrimination. The first record date I had. Dizzy had gotten me to do this date with Coleman Hawkins. When I got to the studio they put a lot of blankets over the drums and everything else. I said, "Dizzy, listen! If you don't want a drummer on the date, *I'm going home."* He said, "Just be cool." And I suffered through that. That was done about 1944. Finally, pounding with all this stuff on and way over in the corner of the studio at that time, I finally played "chut-cha BOOM." Two eighth notes and the bass drum. And everybody heard. It was like a new thing to hear! It sounded very soft like "b-b-boom." I listen to the record now and I say, "Well . . . ." But at that time, the drums were always felt and not heard.

SF: I wanted to ask you about the development of your solo pieces like "Conversation" and "For Big Sid."

MR: It was just compositional form. After you get past, say, the "techniques" of an art form—and we're dealing with music—even though you play a melodic or an instrument of indeterminate pitch, no matter what you do on that instrument, if you are running up and down that instrument with all kinds of pyrotechnical things it doesn't necessarily have to make sense. It doesn't mean anything even though you're playing the right changes, and all the right notes that are coinciding with the chordal progression. What makes a piece an art piece is *design.* If you play any instrument, and you don't create design; if the artist doesn't know how to utilize space and sound, the dynamics of soft and loud, and all the little things, then it's not a piece anyway, whether you're playing an instrument of determinate or indeterminate pitch.

I hear some people who run up and down the piano and it's not musical. All I can say is, "Well, he's got good technique." But, I never say he's playing music, or he's creating some design. So, when I build a solo, it's design within the structure of something, sometime. Basically it's design. Like creating a poem, a painting, or anything else. It's how you use it to set up certain things. Space is important and dynamics are important, and things like sequences or sequential things are important. How you relate to certain timbres on the set itself is important. That's how you build a solo.

SF: The initial ideas for the pieces—where do they come from?

MR: Well, they come from maybe a phrase that you improvise with. They can come with a time signature. All the possibilities. After you've mastered the techniques and you've got good hands, good feet, good coordination; your separation is together, you know how to use all four limbs equally yet apart, the next step is *ideas.* You have to create and invent new ideas that do things, and each idea has to be different. It has to be a different challenge. If this idea is dense, then maybe the next idea you're playing can be very open. There are gradations

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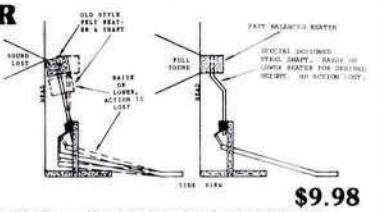

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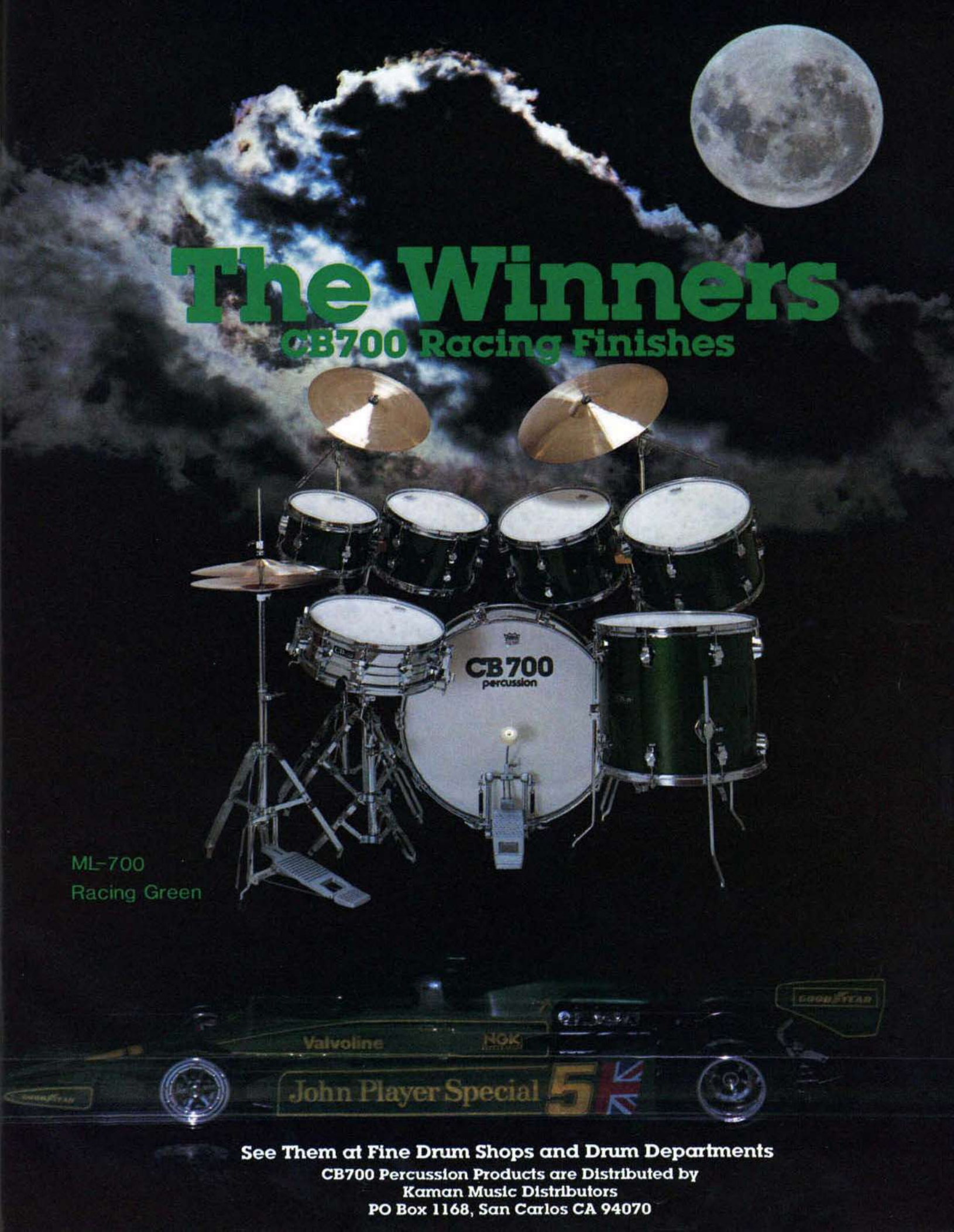

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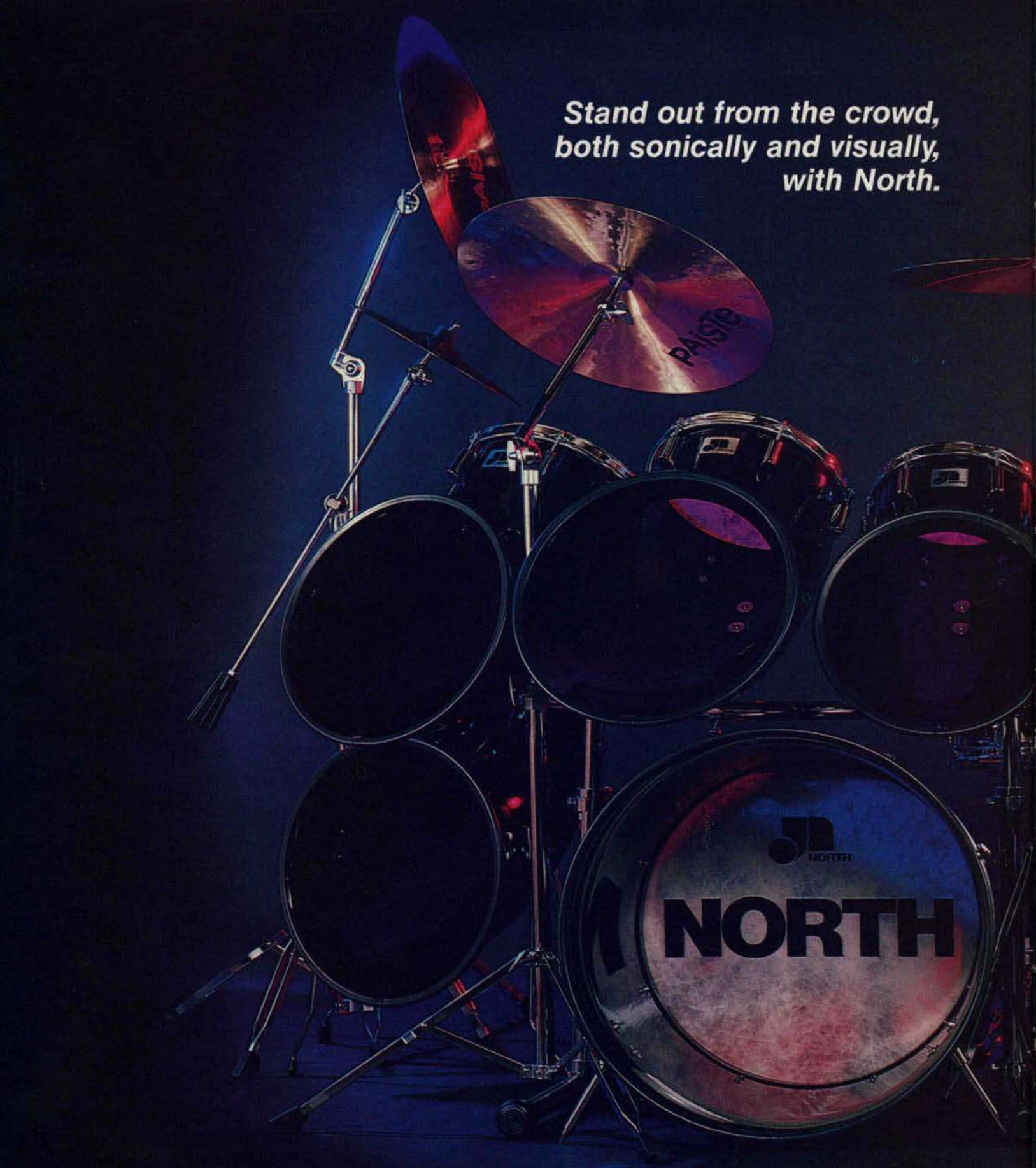

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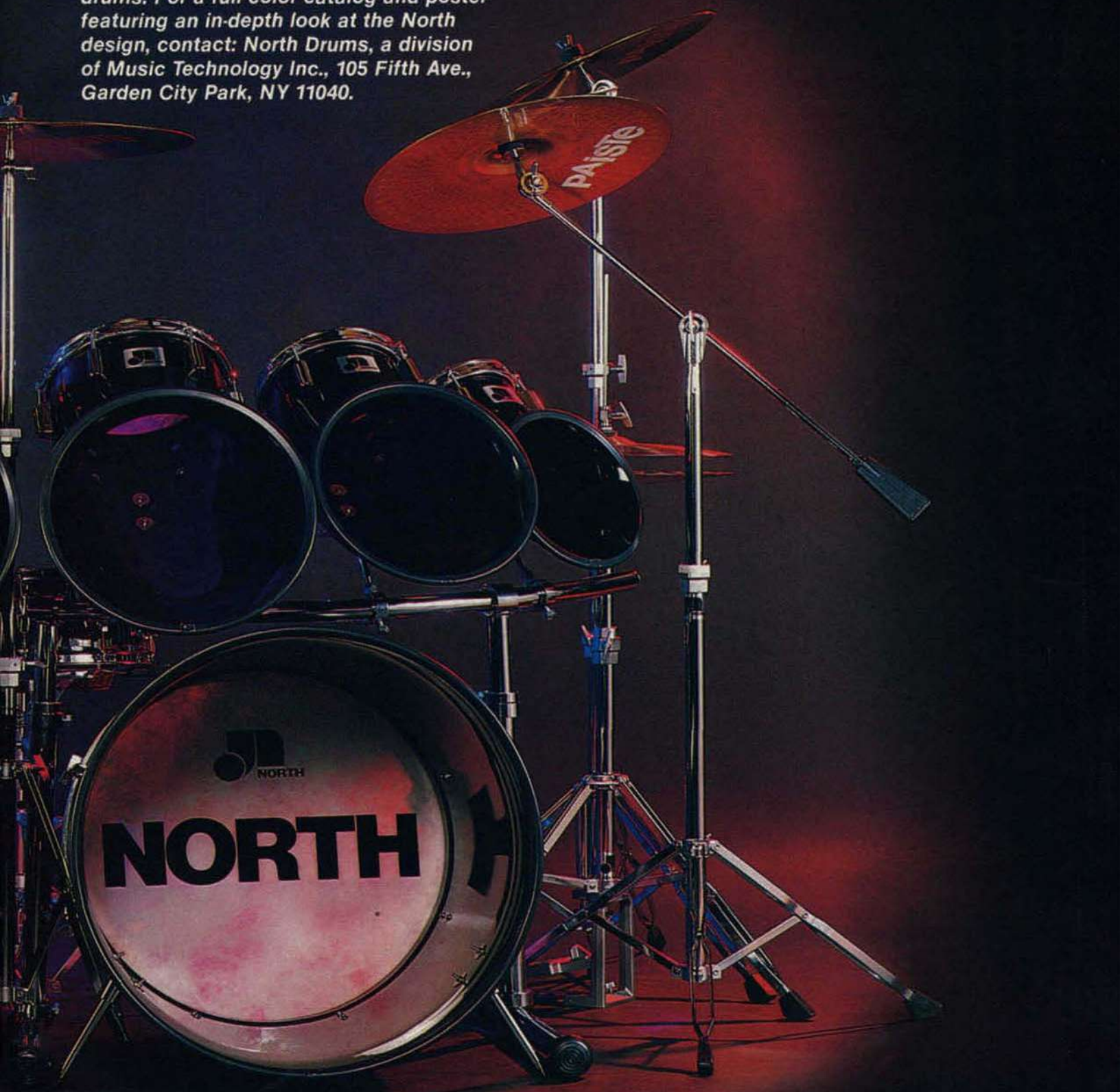

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SF: When you're playing tunes with lyrics, is it important—as a drummer—to be aware of the lyrical content of the tune?

MR: It is if you're dealing in that area. I don't deal too much in that area. My specialty is instrumental. If I do a lyric—

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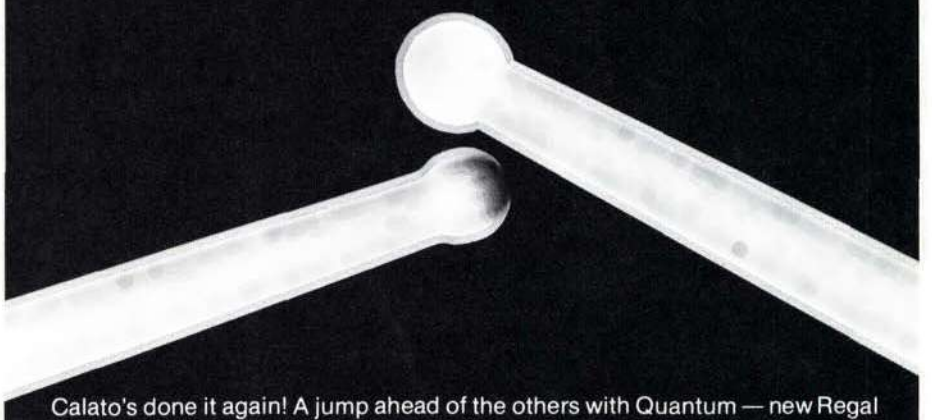

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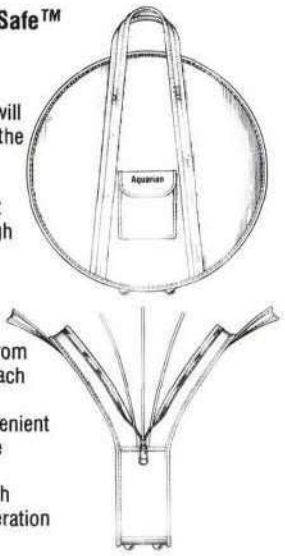

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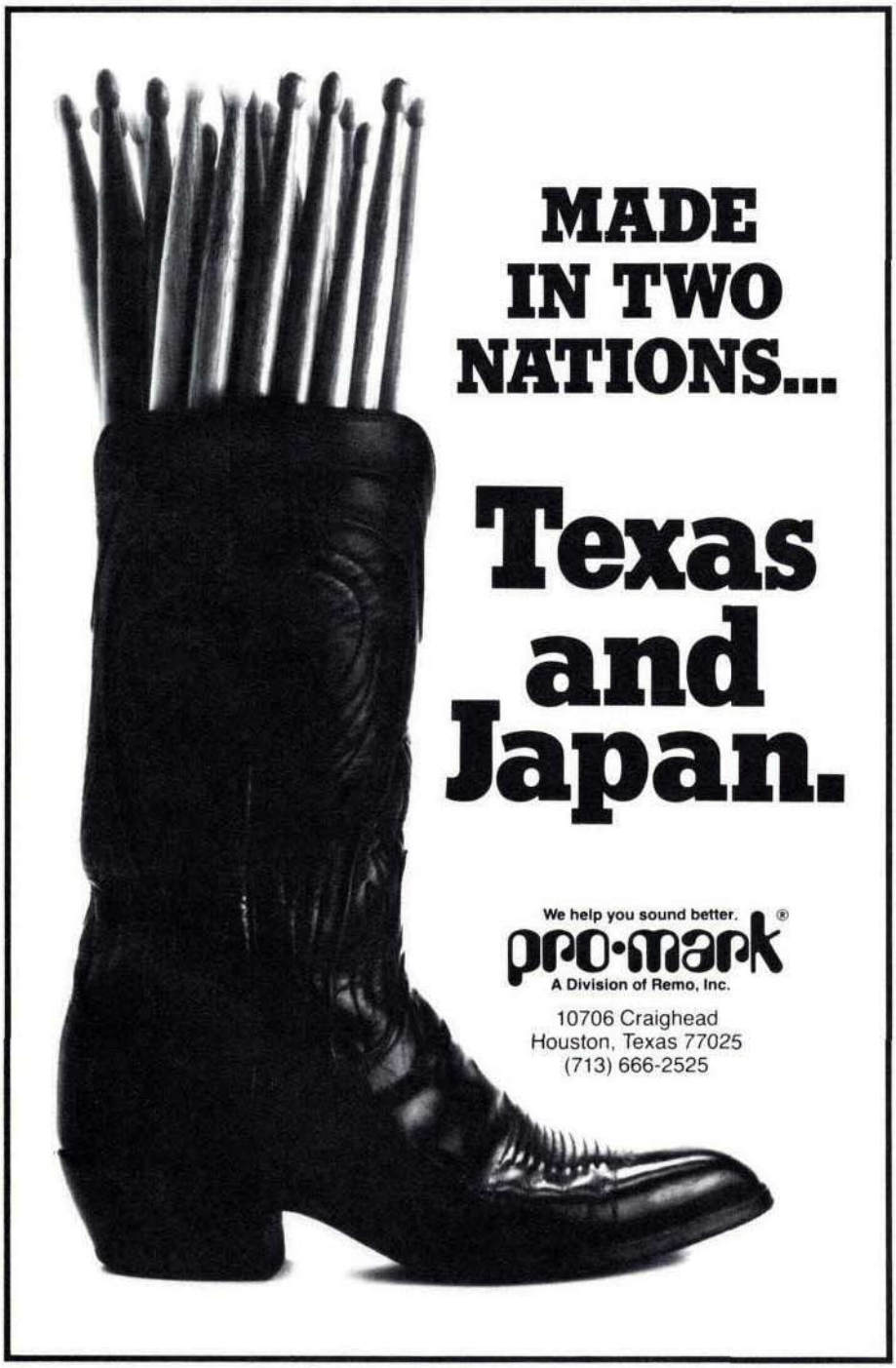

now at least—I would sing it myself. And I would write it myself. My forte at this point is dealing with the instrument as a solo instrument *as well as* an accompanying instrument.

SF: You're an equal voice?

MR: Yeah. It's like it's always in a duet context. I'm not just keeping time for somebody. I believe that musicians should learn how to keep their own time if they're professional musicians and dealing with the music of this area we're talking about. The beautiful thing about working with a person like a Charlie Parker was that he had what I called a *built-in* rhythm section, that *without* the band, *without* a rhythm section—you could hear the pulse. Always. The way he'd phrase and the way he dealt with eighth notes, sixteenth notes—there was always a sense of time. So a drummer didn't have to keep time for him. Therefore, you could play *in between* the phrases. You could do what you wanted to do with him. That was the beauty of working with Dizzy and Miles and Charlie Parker, and folks like that. You weren't just restricted to keeping time for them.

SF: Trying to hold them together.

MR: Hold them together. Exactly! "Drummer! Your function is to *hold us together."* That's what's happening to drumming today. They hire a drummer to keep the rhythm. That's it.

SF: Have you ever thought of doing something with M'Boom using just drumsets?

MR: We do a thing we call "Rise and Fly," but we use only two sets of drums. You can do it with one set, actually. You have one set of drums so there's a challenge there. It's not a matter of every player playing in the same tempo. I do my number for maybe a short span of time, then I get up and there's a space. You come in and you don't have to relate to the same time I'm doing or the same mood or anything. You do what you're going to do. Everybody does his own thing. It doesn't have to relate to what the person that's just finished has done. See, with five or six drumsets you seem to be all together. I think the percussion ensemble has not been dealt with, at least, in this improvisational area. When we say "improvisational" it's not *totally* improvised. Somebody gives a guideline, which we call a "head," and the rest of it we contribute ourselves. It's like Count Basie's band or Herman's band or Buddy's band. There's a certain amount of annotated stuff and then some is improvised. That's the way our percussion ensemble is being treated, and this is the way we're hoping to deal with percussion—period! It's dealing in this area we call jazz. It's annotated, improvisational and the craftsmanship of all the instru-

continued on page 60

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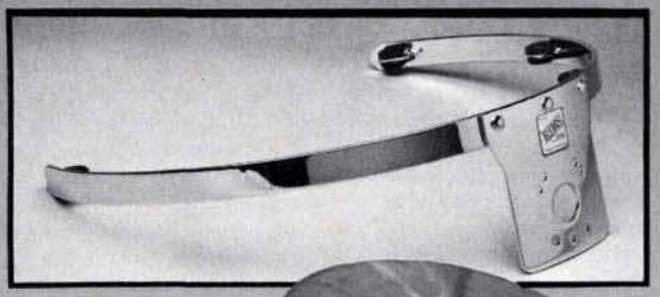

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Warren Smith just amazes us when he plays the solo on "Epistrophy" on the tympani. And now that we've seen it done, everybody in M'Boom can deal with it. It's an experience to work with a group of musicians who are constantly probing and looking for new things to do. Our rehearsals are just so much fun. Rehearsals are like a learning experience. If today you did mallets on one part, then tomorrow I have to play mallets, and so forth. It's a constant thing and everyone brings a different attitude to it.

SF: You had mentioned something in *International Musician* about the importance of being aware of the quarter note. I wonder if you could elaborate on that.

MR: The quarter note is the basic thing regardless of the meter. It's like the common denominator. If you're in 3/8 or 6/8 or 7/8—there's a relationship to understanding where the quarter note is in that pulse regardless of where you are. The basic rudiment, for me, for percussion players is that which is a drone: All four limbs playing just a quarter note. They can do it for five minutes, like a drone, where it's transparent.

Say you play the quarter note with the bass drum, the foot cymbal, the snare, and maybe a ride cymbal. Just quarter notes and you have the kind of transparency in it that you could hear all four limbs in concert. One would not override the other. It helps give you some kind of perspective on what the drumset sounds like collectively. Of course you're *listening* to yourself when you do that to make sure that your bass drum doesn't override your hi-hat. It helps you also to understand the relationship between the timbres of the instrument—all these drums, these different things that you have around you. It also helps you *physically* to know that, maybe you have to come down heavier on the hi-hat. Maybe you have to lighten up on the ride. Maybe you have to lighten up on the snare or come down heavy on the bass drum. I was talking about the quarter note from that aspect, and understanding the timbre of the instrument and getting a feeling of all four things working like a machine. So that when you start beginning to separate things, there's a certain amount of transparency, no matter how much you're traveling all over the instrument. Everything is being heard. Everything *should* be heard.

I hate to hear someone pounding away and see the hi-hat moving and I don't hear what *they* hear in relationship to what they're doing. I know that the drummer onstage hears that hi-hat within the context of what he's doing. He *hears* that. But, all I do is *see* it. That means if he could maybe develop a system where he could make sure, that maybe he comes down with his hands on areas that the hi-hat would be heard, it would *enhance* what he's doing because that's what he *means* to do! Otherwise you wouldn't see the hi-hat moving.

SF: Obviously you're still practicing. Do you still work out new ideas on the drumset?

MR: What I do now is practice to keep my chops up. I practice singles and doubles with hands *and* feet. Sometimes I practice combinations. Say you would have four eighth notes: The first eighth note may be your bass drum, the second one would be the right hand, the third one would be the hi-hat, and the fourth one would be the left hand on a different part of the set. So it would sound like: Bass drum; right hand maybe on a ride cymbal; hi-hat "chick"; and snare drum. That's a combination. There are *unlimited* ways of doing it. If I think of an invention or something that involves combinations, I'll work it out that way. But, mostly what I do is play singles and doubles to keep my chops up. When I come to a situation my improvisation should be pure even though I've got a lot of combinations and inventions that I've taken the time to work out, by annotating them and slowly working them out until they become part of my anatomy. So anytime I call for this invention, or this thing, I can just get to it. I practice so that when I'm working, everything is fresh again. I don't practice what I'm going to play. I want everything to be up.

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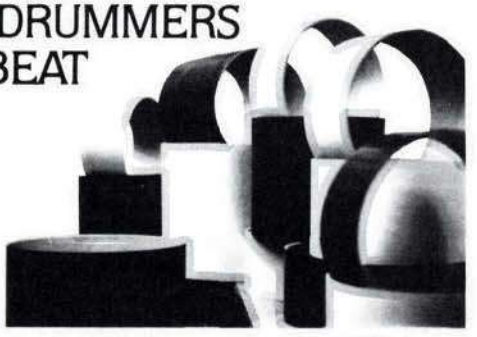

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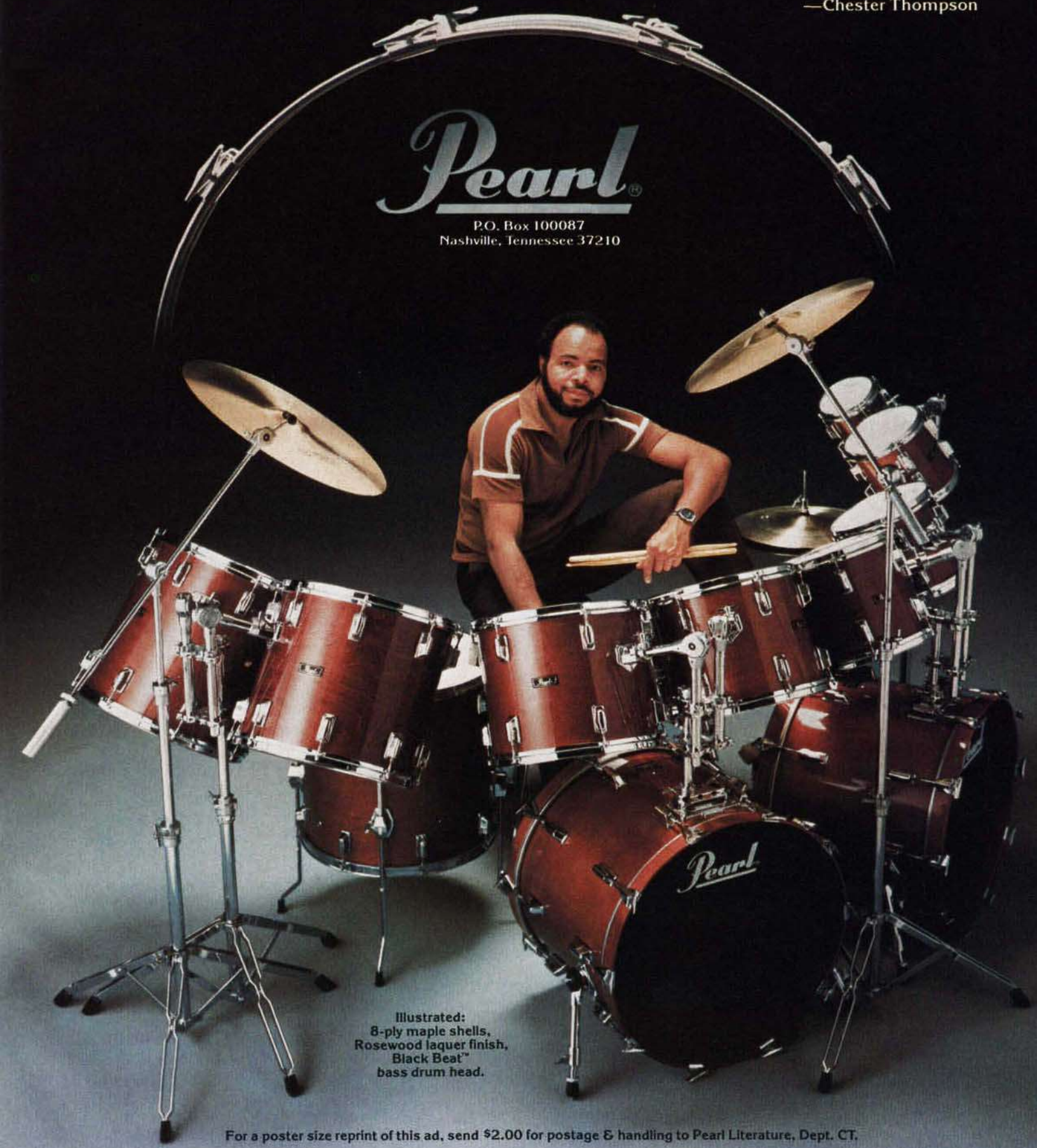

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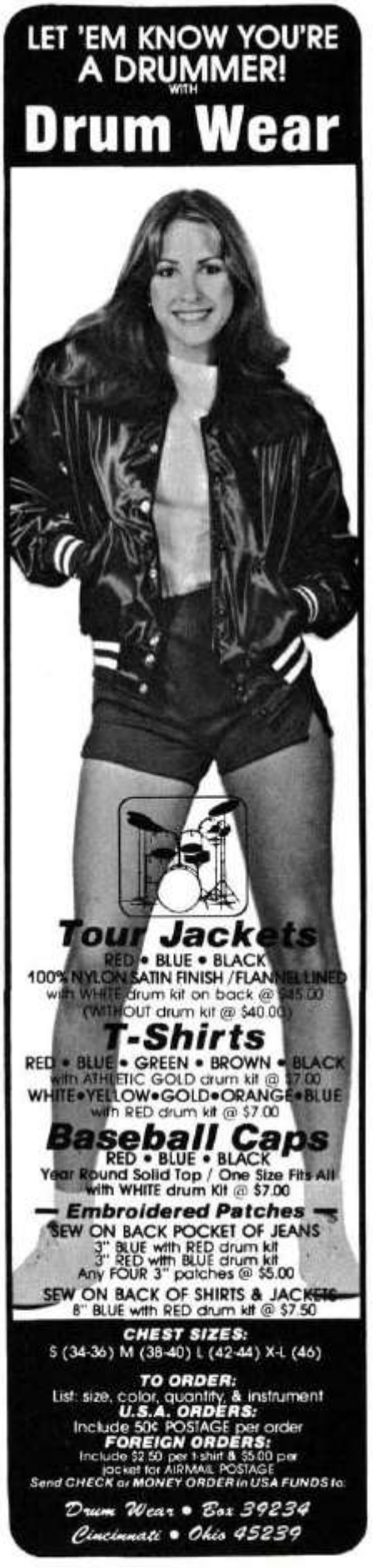

Sometimes you go on the gig and you're calling for things and it just does not happen! You should try everyday to get a little bit in.

SF: Some of the tempos that you play are lightning fast.

MR: That's done through combinations though! No one limb is overworking. There's a way that it works itself out so that all the weight isn't on the right hand, or the left hand, or the foot, or both feet. It's put together so that every limb is working so that it *sounds* fast. It sounds fast because each limb is doing a little something. It's really very relaxed. But, it's *way* up there! And you can just go for as long as you want to as long as you distribute the work equally.

SF: Are you thinking in half-time at those tempos'?

MR: No, I'm thinking upstairs. But, I know I may have to go for an hour or a half-hour. See. coming up, I'd sometimes be the drummer on the stage with nine guys in the front line. So, you learn how to expect this. Forget about playing a drum solo. You're just strictly accompanying time. Forget about it!

SF: I've noticed that you're using matched grip almost exclusively these days.

MR: I find that the matched grip, for me, is much more flexible and I use the military grip on the left hand—since I'm right handed—when I want certain effects. Like, if I want to dig the stick into the snare drum to create a quarter-note guitar effect, like Freddie Green does with Count Basie, then I use the military grip. Just for that quarter-note effect and then open that up into some other kinds of designs, some polyrhythmic designs. But basically, other than effects like that, I basically am using the matched grip exclusively now.

It's great for me because I'm playing mallet instruments as well, so the matched grip is there, and my major at Manhattan was tympani. So the matched grip was always a part of me, but I just never used it before that because that was the way the snare drum was set up.

Other players are still very comfortable with it. Blakey uses a combination of both. I think Elvin Jones uses it, and Buddy still uses the combination.

I have always been taught that you should deal with every technique possible, because you never know when you are called upon to do something, and you have to accomplish it by any means necessary from a technical point of view. So the more different techniques that you have mastered or come up with, I find it's easier to deal with.

SF: Where do you see yourself in five years?

MR: Well, I'd like to see more percussion ensembles out here. I think we've come to the point now where percussionists can at least make the kind of contributions that the bands have made in the music of this area. I really do. I do a lot of writing. At the moment I'm working on the music for a film of the day that Malcolm X died, and I'm doing some stage projects. I enjoy writing and I enjoy playing my drums. I really do. I enjoy it. I want to do more of the same and do new projects with percussion. I see M'Boom doing things with voices; with strings or with soloists, with maybe a woodwind or brass player. Things like that. I'm also working on my biography.

I must say that the technique in what's happening now with the drummers of today—such a wide variety of things are happening percussively. I think the whole art of percussion as we know it in the USA—the jazz drums is perhaps the only indigenous instrument.

SF: I heard you on a radio talk show stating that you felt that the media, mostly, was giving listeners too much of the same kind of music.

MR: Most people tend to be sectarian. If you're an opera buff, you're almost hard pressed to hear someone do something out of context of the opera because you think it's bastardizing the form. You may not even deal with symphony music that much. And I've heard a lot of people who appreciate symphonic music who can't stand opera. By the same token, you'll find people who are in the rock thing can't stand jazz and vice versa. And then jazz has it's other levels where the swing era people can't use the avant garde, and the avant garde can't use the contemporary.

When I did my clinic in Austin I'd read in the paper that The Police were coming to town. So, I went to hear The Police and I really enjoyed it because it's a whole lesson in mass appeal. They played before an audience of thirty thousand people. And Stewart, and Sting, and Andy—it was a brilliant performance for me! And it was in the genre that I could understand because I didn't go there looking for them to sound like The Modern Jazz Quartet. So I could enjoy myself.

The things that The Police are doing electronic-wise with percussion is fantastic. They carry their own P.A. system, but the way that his bass drum comes through those speakers that they have in this place that holds thirty thousand people in it! Every seat was taken. They were standing all in the aisles. We're talking about the economy! Somebody could take a lesson from them!

I'm just trying to enjoy myself. I tell most of the students that do come to me up at U. Mass. to enjoy culture! Don't go there with so many biases that you can't enjoy it. There's something in it that will appeal to you down the line.

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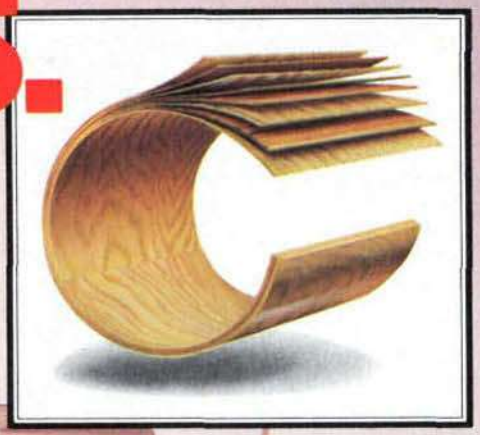

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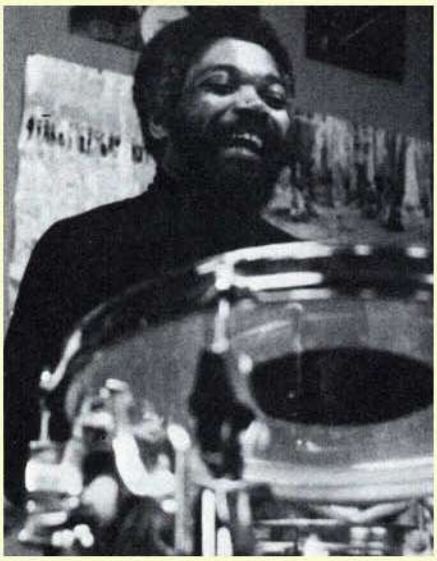


Photo by Collis Davis/Shaida

Q. Do you have any suggestions on becoming a melodic drummer?

Howard Eastland
New York, NY

A. For me, it seems to be simple. You must think in terms of melody instead of just rhythm. One thing that helps me is that I love melody. I'm always singing and whistling to myself. Not just tunes, but scales. It has become a part of me. If you had all the technical and melodic facility in the world, and they were both equal, on a spiritual level the technical facility would be subordinate to the melodic facility. Melodic players want to project the music more than they want to project the instrument. Nobody had more technique than Coltrane, yet he was much more concerned with melody. He obviously spent time on his technique, but in his personality the technique was subordinate to the melody.

HAL BLAINE

Q. Do you teach drums? If so, how can I get in touch with you for lessons?

(Anonymous)

A. I'm not really a teacher, but let me explain something. Studying with a drummer/professional is not going to make you a top drummer. You are going to make yourself a top drummer by the sheer "want" that you seem to have. That drive makes the difference between a serious drummer and a kid looking for some attention.

Once you have the rudiments, the basic elements of drumming, down, you can do anything. You don't need me or anyone else to express yourself. You are you! Be an original! You don't need anybody telling you to do it their way. You need to do it your way. I don't mean become a cocky know-it-all. Diplomatically, you can drive a band and yourself beyond your wildest expectations!

What makes a good or great drummer? A drummer that gives it his or her all. Listen to all the records available, all the TV shows, all the movies and commercials. There's some great drumming going on out there. That's where you'll learn to express yourself. Listen to everything . .. and then do your own thing.

BUDDY RICH

Q. What do you concentrate on when you are playing?

Fred J. Suder
New Orleans, La.

A. My concentration is focused on the band playing well as a unit rather than my own playing as an individual musician.

Photo by Thomas K. O'Neill

RICK MAROTTA

Q. I notice you sit very low behind the drum set. Why do you sit so low, and how has this affected your playing style?

Bobby Bradberry
San Francisco, Ca.

A. The reason I sit so low is because when I first started playing that's how I sat at the drum set. When Andy Newmark and I were kids together, I used to play on his drums sometimes and they were set up really low. It made me feel as though I was inside the kit instead of on top of it. I can go smoothly around the drums and I can come down hard on the snare head when I need to. With the snare drum down low I don't feel like I can get any power. As a matter of fact I have some marks on my legs from accidently hitting them. Sometimes my knees would come up a little bit above the snare drum.

ELVIN JONES

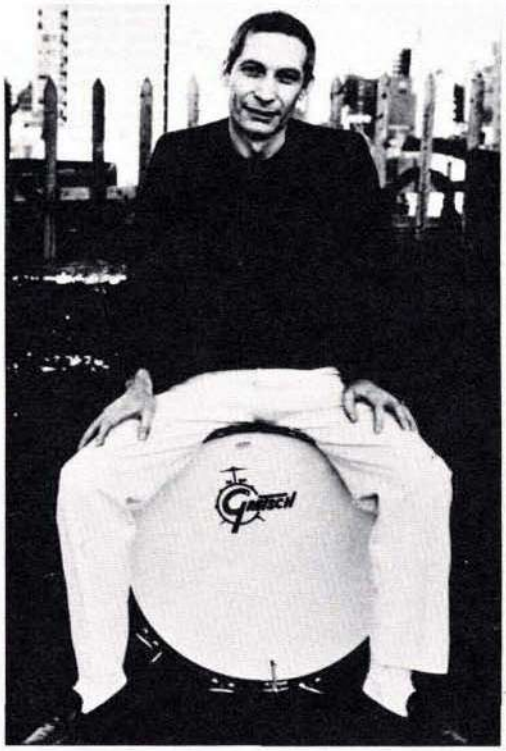
Q. Do you play any other instrument besides the drums?

A.U.
Menlo Park, Ca.

A. Well, I always like to tinker around with the guitar. I can play a few tunes on it, so I guess you can say I play the guitar. That's one of my secret loves. I was trapped into playing the guitar once on a recording session and I played a little on that. I have a piano in my home and I tinker with that a little, too. I know the scales. The guitar is a very personal instrument. By that I mean it is personal to me as an extra companion. Like the drums, the guitar has unlimited musical possibilities. If one wants to investigate a way to find it, with enough understanding one will see there is sort of a parallel between the two. A guitar can be a melodic and a percussive instrument combined. An example of this is the way the Spanish Flemenco guitar players use the instrument. It is highly sensitive to tuning. Even greater than the piano, because you can get quarter tones.

AND THE UNBEATABLES GO ON...

Charlie Watts, Rolling Stones



Tony Williams, Drummer

Between Charlie Watts and Tony Williams, there's about 40 years of sets, from laid-back to blistering . . . all of them on Gretsch. Both Watts and Williams have brought their own unique styles and brands of improvisation to music we've grown up with, and it looks as though their inventiveness and consistently inspired playing is going to surprise and delight us for a long time to come.

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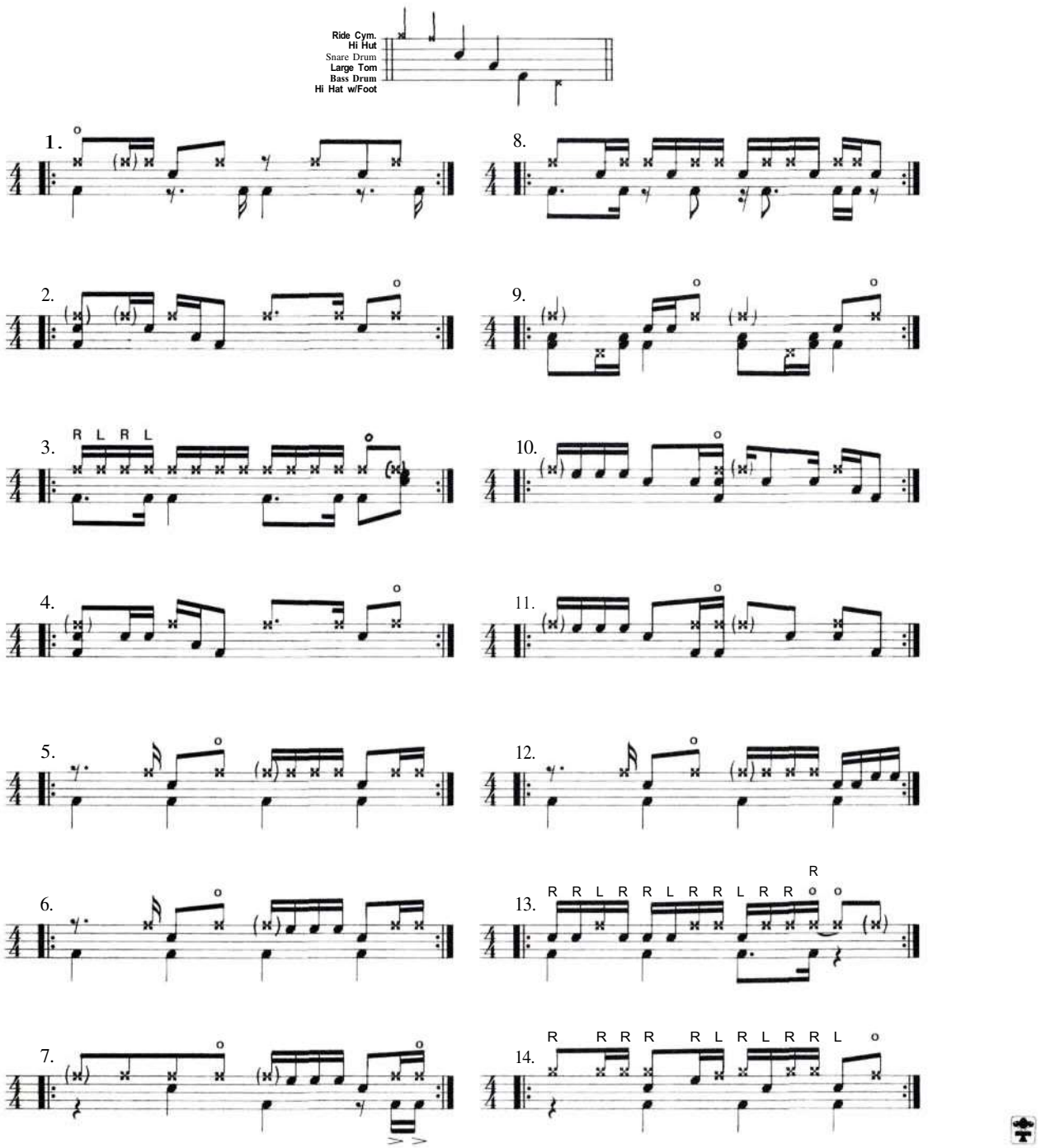
THE UNBEATABLY SOUND INVESTMENT GRETSCH

by James Morton

Fusion Rhythms

One of the most distinguishing features of today's fusion drumming is the absence, on occasion, of an ongoing ride pattern. Rather, various sticking and rhythmic patterns, not necessarily based on the hi-hat or ride cymbal, provide a pulsating, recurring motif that remains true to the feeling of the music and to the time-keeping role of the drummer. Considering the permeating nature of the ride rhythm in traditional jazz and rock, this is no small achievement, and may well point the way to the future of drumming. Here are some current fusion beats that reflect this newfound freedom of expression.



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by Roy Burns

Success:
Is It Who You Know Or What You Know?

Success, and how to achieve it, is an endless topic for conversation, especially in such an uncertain business as music. And it *is* a business! Club owners, managers, promoters, record company executives and many others will explain their point of view to any musician who will listen.

Years ago, the attitude of musicians and many teachers was, "Just play well and the money will come." Younger musicians have learned the hard way that "It ain't necessarily so."

It's not easy to concentrate on one's art and, at the same time, be taking care of business. This is the eternal conflict: Music and business, all rolled into one. It is not an easy task to reconcile both interests.

Some young musicians put their future totally in the hands of a manager. This is a good move if the manager is sharp, dedicated and loyal. However, when money is involved, especially a lot of money, it is a very good idea to have some understanding of what's going on in order to protect yourself.

Many books are available that explain some ins and outs of the music business. Publishing, taxes, managers, copyrights and contracts become less mystifying after reading a couple of these books. Now don't misunderstand me: I am not suggesting that you become a certified public accountant. Just develop a general idea of each topic and then ask questions. It is amazing what you can find out on your own once you know which questions to ask.

Some young musicians, put off by horror stories of people ripping off musicians, decide to do the whole thing themselves. They form a corporation, hire a band, book the clubs, file the taxes and, in short, become leader, publisher, lawyer, manager and performer all in one.

Although there is some danger of a "burn-out," some have managed to do it. It probably works best at the local level. Booking jobs in your area is somewhat easier than booking national and international concert tours.

Perhaps the best thing about the "do-it-all-yourself" approach is that you learn so much about the business. With this information it becomes easier to tell if your manager, lawyer and booking agent are doing a good job for you. It may also provide clues as to their honesty. When you have done some of the work yourself, it is much tougher to be fooled by others.

Some musicians elect to "let someone else handle it. I just want to play." This attitude will work for gifted players, but only up to a point. Sooner or later, no matter how well you play, you will wonder why other musicians are earning more money than you. This is especially disturbing when they may not play as well.

My own feeling about success is that it is who you know *as well as* what you know. For example, if a friend recommends you for a recording session, you got the recommendation based on "who you know." However, if you do not perform well, in other words, if you do not demonstrate "what you know" effectively, you most likely will not even finish the session. The producer will be on the phone calling a more experienced drummer.

Music is one business where friends are truly important. So many opportunities are made and lost on the recommendation of a friend.

Never let a friend down is a rule to be observed in the music business. For example, if you are recommended for a recording session that calls for vibes as well as drums, be sure that you can handle it. Don't tell your friend "yes" unless you can really play vibes as well as drums. If you take the job and then botch it up, you have let two people down: yourself as well as your friend. And it may be tougher getting a second recommendation.

Many musicians have made the error of hiring all of their friends for their first attempt as a band leader. Oddly enough, your so-called "friends" think that they can show up late, drink too much and not take care of business. These so-called "friends" are simply taking advantage of you, and if you are smart you don't rehire them. Hire the friends who value your friendship and your commitment to taking care of business. Real friends want you to be successful and will do their best for you.

Some young people feel that all they need is "the big break." Actually, most careers are built on a series of breaks, one leading to the next. It is not usually based on just one big break. Don't underestimate luck. It does happen. However, the key is to be prepared to take advantage of the breaks that come your way.

If you look around carefully, you will discover that the people who cry that they never had a break often have other problems. Usually they are late, drink too much, forget their music and forget to show up at rehearsals. People like this simply need to grow up and become more responsible. Otherwise, they will continue to complain about "the breaks" to those who will listen. It reminds me of the old saying "Success is just a matter of luck. Ask any failure."

People who are not successful always have excuses such as: "It is all politics; I never had a break; it is all who you know; it is just my bad luck." Don't be a complainer. Decide what you want to be, work at it and give it your best shot. Hard work helps. Complaining and inventing excuses doesn't.

Some Do's and Don'ts On the Way to Success

Don't sign a contract if the person trying to get you to sign is in a hurry. My experience is that any serious offer will wait twenty-four hours. Ask to show the contract to your parents or to your lawyer. If the person attempting to sign you up will not wait twenty-four hours, then don't sign.

Do read books on copyrights, publishing, contracts and any other aspect of the music business. Many are available at the local library for free. Most are available in paper-back.

Don't believe everything you read about successful people. Depending on the area of the music business, many stories bend the truth or fabricate it entirely for publicity reasons. As my mother used to say, "take it with a grain of salt. Don't believe all of it."

Do ask questions. Go to clinics, write to *Modern Drummer,* attend seminars, ask questions and keep asking them. It is amazing how much information you can gather just by asking questions.

Remember, success is a combination of several things: Who you know, what you know and hard work. If you have this combination in mind, you should receive your share of "breaks."

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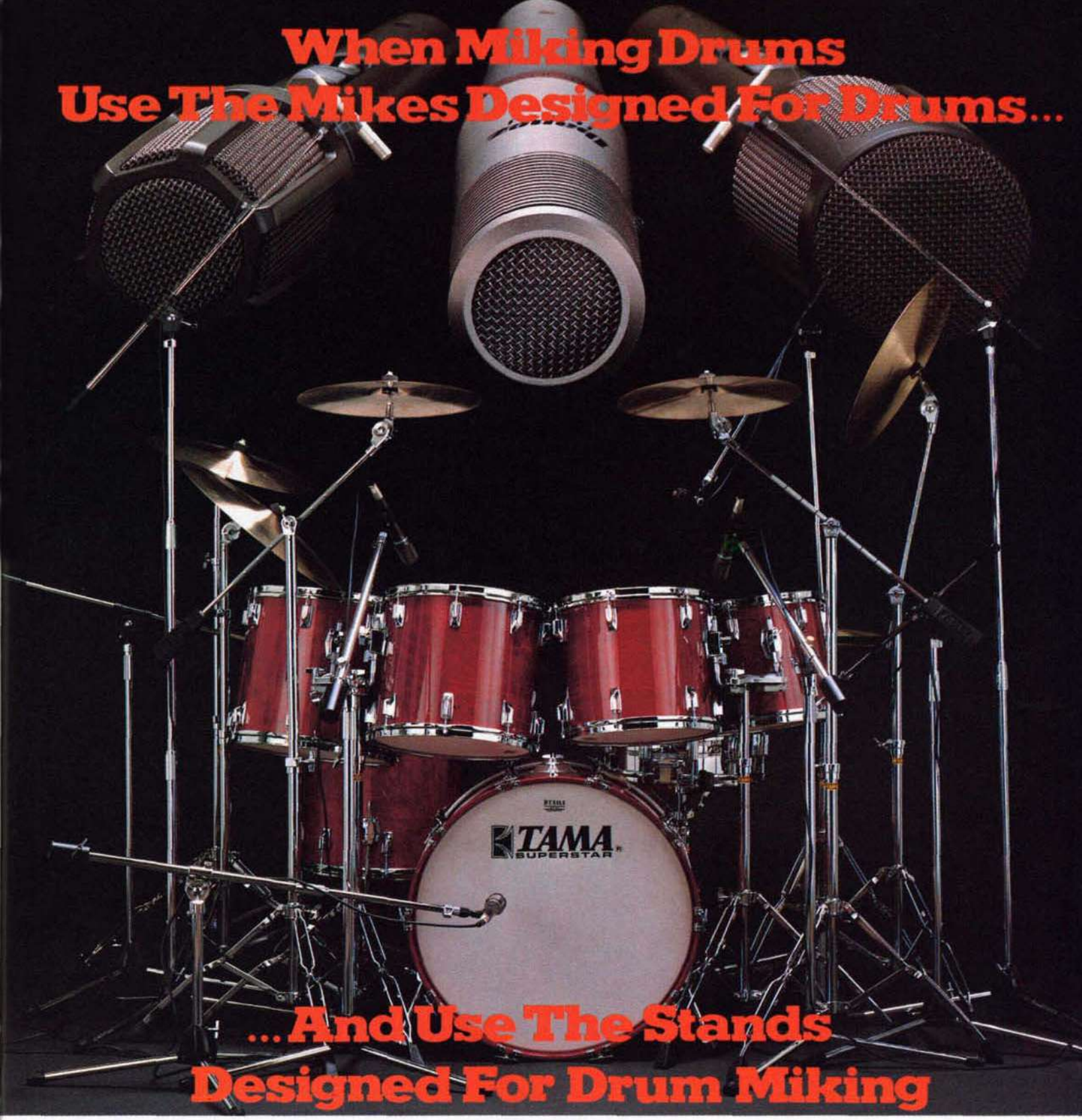

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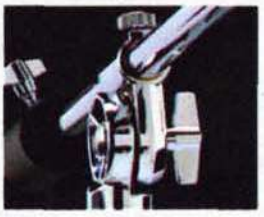

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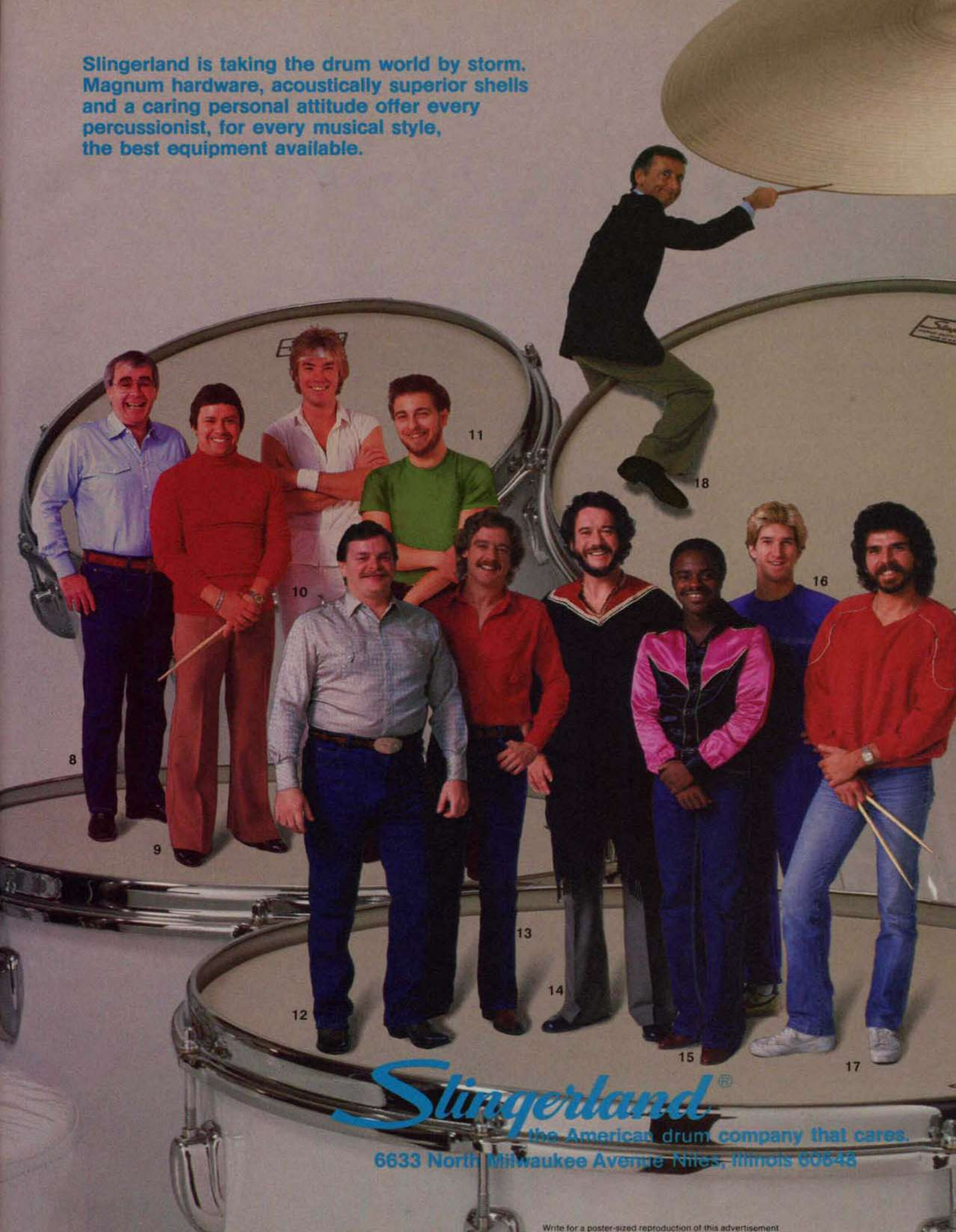
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Sonny Greer

by Scott K. Fish

Drive uptown on Broadway in Manhattan on a Monday night. The streets are all lit up in yellow, and there are students from NYU milling about. Park the car and cross the street to the West End Cafe. When you get inside you feel like you've got the wrong place. This is supposed to be *a jazz* club. To the left is a cafeteria counter. To the right is a circular bar. You walk across a hardwood floor between the two, headed for two pinball machines and a cigarette machine, and make a quick left into the jazz room.

All of a sudden the cafeteria noise is filtered out as your eyes adjust to the darkness. There are rows of booths on either side of this room and tables scattered in the middle. At the far end is a bandstand, and there sits a baby-grand piano, and the gaudiest set of drums I'd ever seen. It's just a bass drum, a snare, and a floor tom, covered in small, square mirrors, like a globe that hangs from the center of a dancehall ceiling, and bounces light all around the room.

This small, fragile-looking old man climbs onstage with the piano player, sits down behind the set, picks up a pair of brushes and begins to play. You're watching history. This is a man that's been playing jazz from the beginning. The brushes wisp across a well-worn snare head onto the large floor tom, or dust one of the two large cymbals.

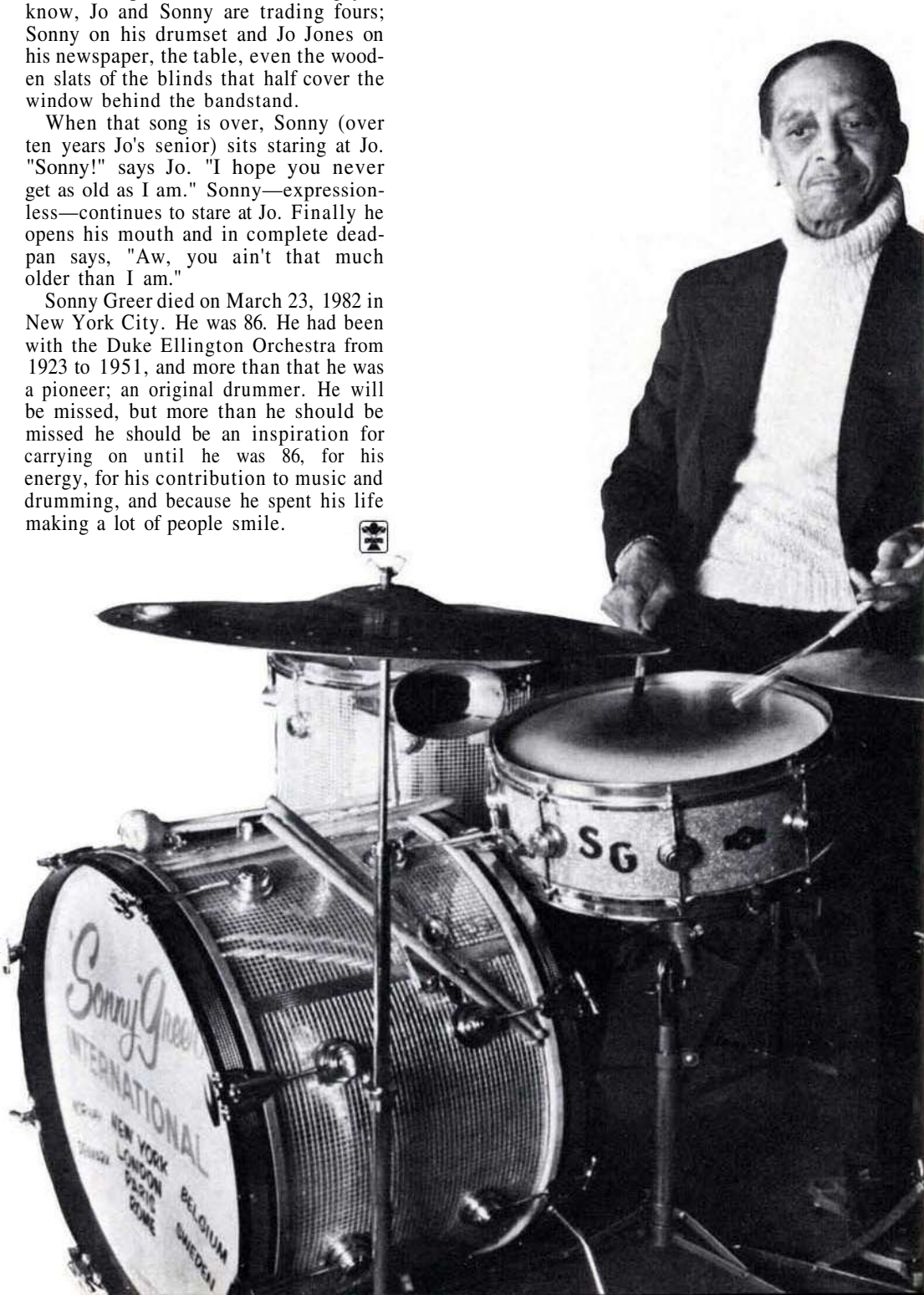
This is Sonny Greer. I judge a musical performance as good if it can move me emotionally, and Sonny makes me smile. I find myself leaning forward, my elbow on my knees, my chin cupped in my hands and concentrating on his hands and his brushwork. "This guy is a master," I'm thinking. And then there's the vaudevillian-like showmanship. Grabbing the right lapel of his coat, accenting with his bass drum while flipping open his coat like a flasher.

But the key to it all is the man's eyes. The body of an old man with the eyes of a child that dance and laugh, and study the people who've come to see this drummer who's been all around the world performing before kings, queens, presidents, and millions of common folk.

Papa Jo Jones walks in with a newspaper folded under his arm, and struts up to just stage left of Sonny and sits in a booth. Jo puts the paper out flat before him and takes a pair of wire brushes out of his coat pocket. The next thing you know, Jo and Sonny are trading fours; Sonny on his drumset and Jo Jones on his newspaper, the table, even the wooden slats of the blinds that half cover the window behind the bandstand.

When that song is over, Sonny (over ten years Jo's senior) sits staring at Jo. "Sonny!" says Jo. "I hope you never get as old as I am." Sonny—expressionless—continues to stare at Jo. Finally he opens his mouth and in complete deadpan says, "Aw, you ain't that much older than I am."

Sonny Greer died on March 23, 1982 in New York City. He was 86. He had been with the Duke Ellington Orchestra from 1923 to 1951, and more than that he was a pioneer; an original drummer. He will be missed, but more than he should be missed he should be an inspiration for carrying on until he was 86, for his energy, for his contribution to music and drumming, and because he spent his life making a lot of people smile.



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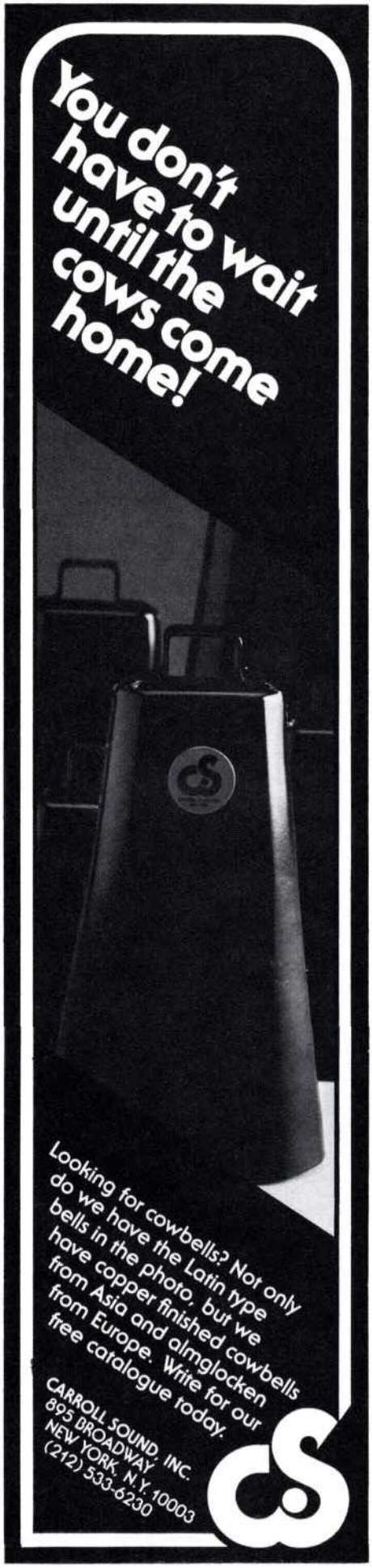

Moon *continued from page 17*

of Elvin's K. Zildjians and the crash of the American surf. But to sustain the sort of energy which Moon put out, control and technique were absolute prerequisites. Moon had strong wrists and good hands, and developed these early in his career; most of the waving of arms and legs was show. He had good, clean chops, much as he would often deny it, and more than once made reference to skillful players: "Technically, Joe Morello is perfect."

Unfortunately, "Moon-the-basher" is often remembered and it is worthwhile to consider what Tony Williams once told English writer Chris Welch of Moon: "He's beautiful, he's totally free" and went on to remark that he ranked Moon among his favorite drummers.

Often it is found, especially in this current age of the "session drummer," that players like Keith Moon are like fish out of water without the groups in which they developed their particular talents. Keith took a few tries at playing outside of the Who. One example, related in the book *Full Moon,* is Harry Nilsson's album *Pussycats.* Keith was called to perform on "Rock Around the Clock." Three drummers were booked for the session: Ringo Starr, Jim Keltner, and Keith Moon. At the time, Keith was not yet in residence in America and did not have the use of his usual drumkits. He requested that he be rented the very largest drumset possible, in this case, eighteen drums. Ringo used his usual five, and Keltner about as many. The three blasted away at a fair clip, and the resulting take is available on record. For Keith, though, doing freelance work ran very much against the grain: "I'm not used to being told to play a certain way. I'm a lousy session musician. I wouldn't play with anybody who asked me to play like that." He simply needed the freedom to interpret the music of his fellow musicians in as many ways as possible. And it was not that he necessarily wanted the spot-light; he abhored drum solos: "I hate drum solos," he told *Melody Maker* in 1975. "Drum solos are the most boring time-consuming things. I don't think of the drums as a solo instrument. Drums are there to set the beat for the music."

Over the years Keith Moon set the beat with some of the most innovative drum setups yet seen. To this day, few drummers attempt to tackle such a varied set as Keith used. There is no doubt about it; Keith was one of the very first in rock music to employ vast drum kits and, more important, to actually use each drum.

To set Moon in context we must take ourselves back to the early '60s when the West Coast music of the United States was enjoying international popularity. Most of the records featured drums mixed far into the background, and the actual tuning was strictly out of the bebop school. Of course, there were exceptions, but recording techniques of the day and drummer preferences sustained that approach. With all the talk of the rhythmic intensity of rock music, one would think that the drums would take more prominence.

Perhaps rock music needed the critical nudge ahead by the British and the likes of Keith Moon. From the first recordings. Keith refused to sit on the beat, tapping out two and four. Rather, he was all over his drums like a rash. And what drums they were!

Premier was the drum of choice for Moon. To this day the Premier Drum Company admits an enormous volume of inquiries regarding Keith Moon and his massive setups. Moon was first and foremost a Brit' and proud of it. Notwithstanding the fact that in the early days Premier drums were more readily available and cheaper than American brands. Moon was proud to play a British drum and, in particular, one whose very name was elitist. It is in very large part due to Keith Moon that Premier drums and hardware have undergone such a radical change over the last fifteen years. There are only a handful of photographs in existence showing Moon playing other than Premier drums.

In 1965 Keith owned an oyster-pearl Ludwig *Super Classic* kit consisting of a 22" bass drum, 13" mounted tom, 16" floor tom, and metal *400* snare drum. His cymbals with this kit were Avedis Zildjian—14" hi-hats, 20" ride mounted on the bass drum, and an 18" crash.

Also, Ludwigs are seen in the Monterey Pops movie, done in 1967. Moon used two 22" bass drums, two 13" toms, two 16" floor toms—one positioned on either side—and three top cymbals. There are some other older photos as well showing Ludwig drum sets taking a toppling. But for Keith it was mainly Premier.

When looking at Keith's various drum setups we must remember that he had little help from drum companies for the longest time. If a drum were smashed it would be replaced by the nearest available similar item at the cheapest price. Thus, his setups were somewhat variable: it is not uncommon to see him using three small toms of identical dimensions, tuned differently, of course. Over the years, it became increasingly apparent to Keith that a premium was to be placed on equipment that could take a dive and survive for the next show.

Arguably one of the most famous drum kits in rock is Keith Moon's Premier "Pictures of Lily" custom set. This notorious drum set appeared after 1967

continued on next page

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on promotional material and was seen in concert through at least 1969. The survival of this kit is attributable to the fact that Moon rarely intentionally trashed equipment: sure, he would often knock the shells around and heave tom-toms, but generally into the waiting hands (or heads) of roadies. The "Pictures Kit" consisted of three mounted toms of the old Premier style—a little more shallow than American drums. These were mounted on two 22" bass drums with Rogers fittings. The bass drums were secured to each other with double metal bracings and had Premier spurs. On Keith's right were two 16" floor toms and, beside a hi-hat locked in the half-closed position, he placed an additional floor tom. This way, as he often remarked, he could get all the bottom end he wanted and still have a floor tom for use as a drinks tray and towel rest. His cymbals were Zildjian, consisting of a 20" or 22" ride (a mighty crash cymbal, the way he played it), another 20" cymbal, and an 18" crash on his right. Each shell was decorated with a series of rectangular panes sporting alternating reclining nudes aside logos of the Who. Interspersed with these pictures were panes exclaiming: "Keith Moon. Patent British Exploding Drummer."

It is probably fair to say that Moon most often used Zildjian cymbals. From time to time, though, he used Paiste, first the 602 series and later, probably out of necessity, the more durable 2002 line, including a 20" Heavy Ride, a cymbal designed for the heaviest of rock players. Barriemore Barlow remarked to *Modern Drummer* (Dec/Jan '79) that "Keith Moon and I shared the record at the Paiste factory for breaking the most cymbals," mainly due to their common love of Paiste 602 16" crash cymbals, which were never intended for rock drumming. Moon also enjoyed the use of a Paiste gong which ranged up to 30" in size and was suspended in a metal ring behind him.

Long before Premier entered the race to produce bigger and better hardware for their drums, they saw the need to do a certain amount of customizing on kits intended for Moon's use. Since Keith most often played his bass drums minus front heads, the shells were weaker with a full complement of tom-toms mounted. Premier fit the shells with solid-steel plates to absorb the impact of toms in constant movement. Since Keith would often stand-up on his bass drums, such precautions were a necessity.

During the early 1970s, Moon first experimented with single-headed tom-toms, and continued using them through 1978. Although his single-headed toms duplicated sizes he was using of the double-headed variety, one would never know it. He positioned four single-headed toms in front of three double-headed mounted toms, tuning the front toms higher. At first his single-headed set would start with a 12" tom, followed by a 13", 14", and 15". Behind these, on the bass drum, would be a double-headed 12", 13", and 14". Numerous experimentations with drum and cymbal setups would occur. But his final setup, from the little he talked about it, was something like this: There were two 22 x 14 bass drums, single headed, although with the front lugs left on. Two floor stands were positioned immediately in front of the bass drums, supporting 10", 12", 13", and 14" melodic toms. On the bass drums he mounted three regular toms: On his left bass drum he had a 12" tom, while on his other he had a 13" and 14" tom. These were followed by a 16" floor tom and an 18" floor tom, both double headed. Above his floor toms, a Premier *Trilok* stand held two single-headed toms—a 15" and a 16", while immediately above these were the final stroke, a pair of timbales. The snare drum was invariably a 5 1/2" or 6 1/2" Premier metal, although he was seen with a Ludwig or Gretsch metal drum from time to time. All this was augmented by a tympani or two. He would often use a 22" ride cymbal, although mounted high up and in the vertical position it was hard to strike like a normal ride, a 20" crash, and another 20", 22", and an 18". One fixture through the years has been a smallish cymbal mounted dead-center on a boom stand; it was often a 14" splash, but could be as large as 16".

Although Moon used the Syndrum on the *Who Are You* album, he never became accustomed to the thought of using them in live settings. After all, with his mighty kit he knew he could cover from a whisper to a roar.

In the '70s, Moon used standard Premier *Everplay* heads, or Remo *Ambassadors*. Gradually he switched to Remo black dot heads, due to the fact that they cut down overtones a little and extended the life of his heads. Be that as it may, when on tour, he would rarely keep a drum head longer than a week. He appreciated the fact that he was a loud drummer, who frequently played with the butt-end of the stick, and liked the sound of a head with life in it. And for all his alleged disinterest in drums and paraphernalia, he was quite meticulous about tuning and had his roadie well-versed in the procedure if he were unable to get out and tension heads himself.

Keith's preferences in drumsticks were in the medium to medium-heavy zone, and he often used English sticks made either by Premier or Dallas Arbiter. In the United States he would pick up batches of whatever was available.

As far as muffling and padding of drums is concerned, one has only to

listen to live and studio takes to know that Moon went for a ringy, open-sounding drum. As his kit expanded and became more difficult to mike, he would often leave the internal mufflers on his double-headed toms just touching the heads to give a cleaner signal. In fact, this was a problem due to the strength with which Keith played. His sound man often had to use windscreens on the mic's to prevent them from popping and crackling: Moon displaced a lot of air and this can be a problem with microphones with unshielded diaphrams. His single-headed toms were miked from the bottom, while his double headed toms were taken from the top. For the bass drums, two mic's each were sometimes used.

Finally, we must remark again that Keith kept his hi-hat locked in the closed position, with about a quarter of an inch gap, to get a sizzling sound while he played both bass drums. The use of two of them was something of an obsession. It was not simply the fact that they looked good, although this was certainly a consideration. In the early days of minimal amplification of drums, Keith saw them as a necessity. Faced with a choice between the thunder of a double bass drum setup and the chick of a hi-hat on two and four when volume was a prime consideration. Moon made the logical choice. Moon's rationale appeared in the French press; permit a rough translation: "The double kit has been long used in jazz. Louis Bellson certainly was one of the first to use it. It's down to the fact that Pete and John have little by little been using more powerful amplification systems which, for me, provides a reason for choosing the double set."

Ordinarily when we discuss world-class drummers we take certain things for granted. They make few glaring mistakes, they play on top of, or behind, the beat, or whatever, and they keep good time. Well, Moon didn't always keep good time, especially under a heavy load of booze and pills. He made mistakes—big mistakes which would shake the band and cause them to look back with murderous eyes. Townshend would implore Moon to "play faster," meaning to wake up and keep up. Towards the end, this occasional lapse was becoming increasingly reflected in his style. The live version of "Baba O'Riley" on *The Kids Are Alright* soundtrack, taped live, is a disappointing display of his enervation. He wasn't trying things—his grandiose tom-tom rolls are less frequent, his bass drum and snare drum work uneven, and the time is all over the place. There is a stop after the line "teenage wasteland," followed by a drum intro which is messy and too slow. It almost seems as if, for once, Keith is thinking too hard. At any rate, there is none of the spontaneity which is evident on the mass of recorded Who material.

It is easy to slag someone when they are down. And Moon was down in 1978 or, at very least, in a period of transition. Both his playing and his pattern of living were showing the effects of changes which he was consciously imposing.

For examples of the typical Moon approach we can take almost any tune. I've chosen a couple from the early and later parts of his career.

Let us consider "I Can See For Miles." When Pete Townshend wrote a tune, and this applies pretty well throughout the history of the Who. he did a demo tape at home and brought it into the studio. I've listened to Townshend's demo for this tune. He played guitar, bass, maintained rhythm on something or other, and did vocal tracks. Most of the stops we know are there, as is the heavy eighth feel. Keith's work on the resultant single is magical; he manages so well to mirror Townshend's energy and intent on the demo. There is lots of splashy cymbal work and rimshot snare drum, both of which were sure to cut through the limitations of record players of the day.

On other such demos, such as "Run, Run, Run," Moon and Entwhistle would dive-in and jam on the chords, eventually agreeing on a bottom line and always leaving room for spontaneous improvisation.

To hear those early demos and the final takes is to appreciate the extent to which Moon's interpretation approaches

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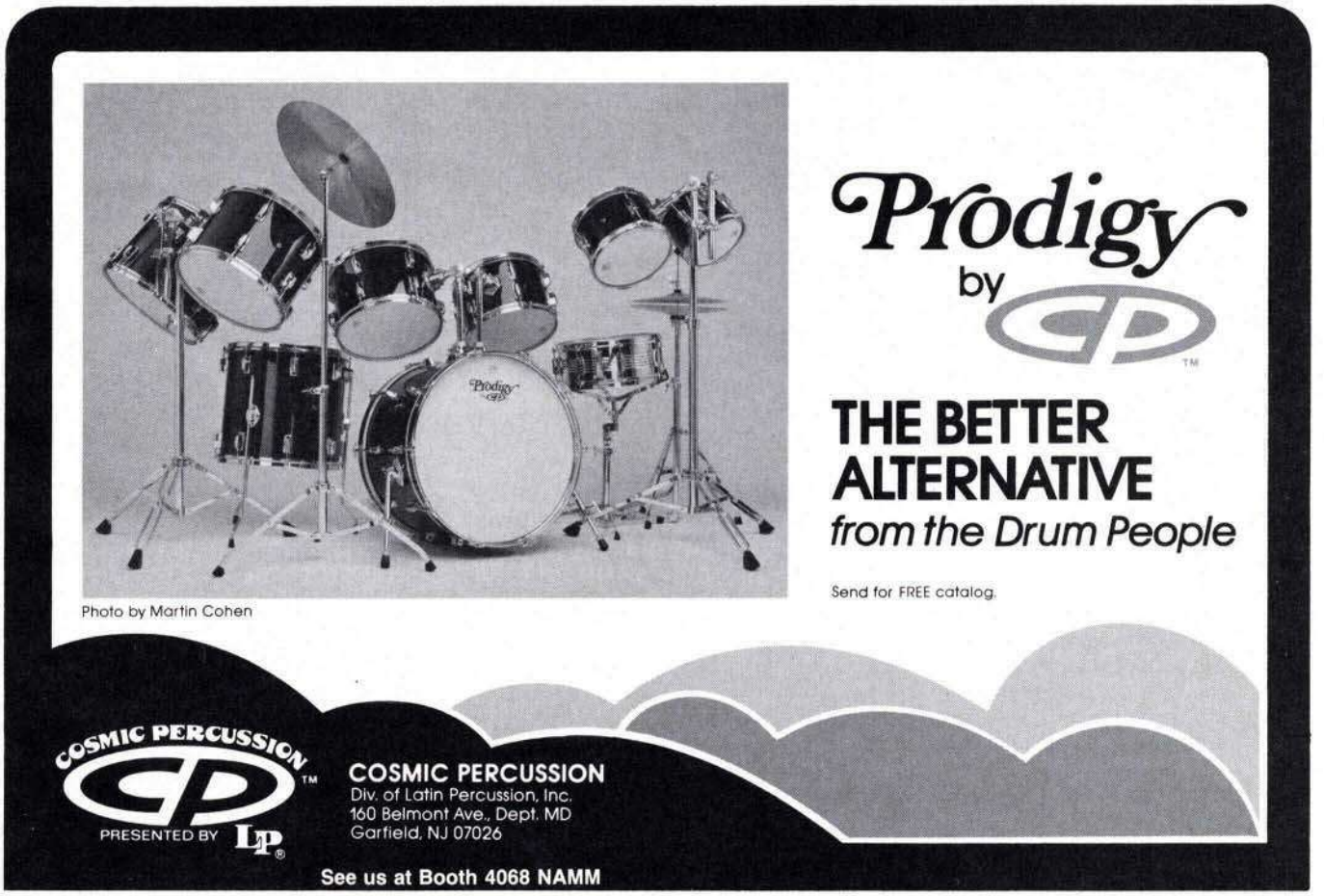

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composition. It is impossible to conceive of many Who tunes, such as "I Can See For Miles," without Moon's drum parts. They are as integral to the tunes as are the triplets in Ravel's *Bolero.*

It has been remarked that Moon's part in the Who's sound was that of a lead guitar. Townshend, for the most part, played block chords which formed a dense wall of sound, which were a backdrop for Moon's inventiveness. Not only did he establish irreplaceable rhythmic lines, but he used his array of toms—more than an octave worth—to set-up and undercut Townshend's ambitious orchestrations with beautiful melodic glissandos.

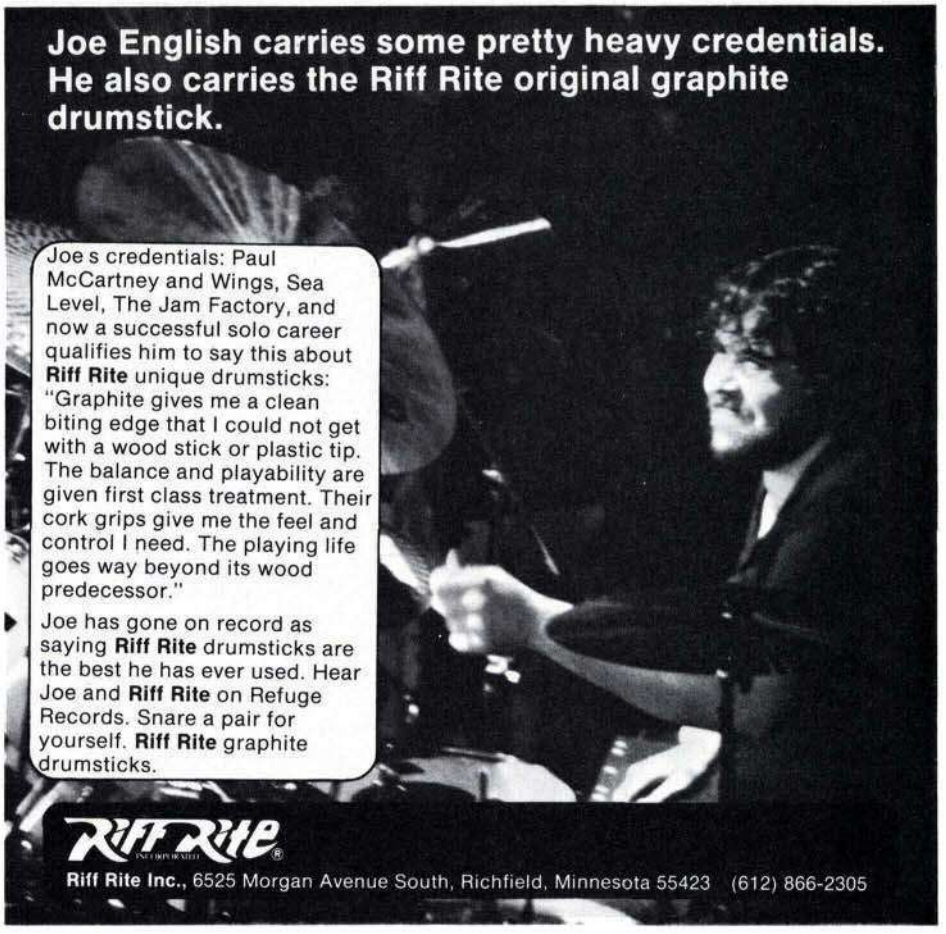
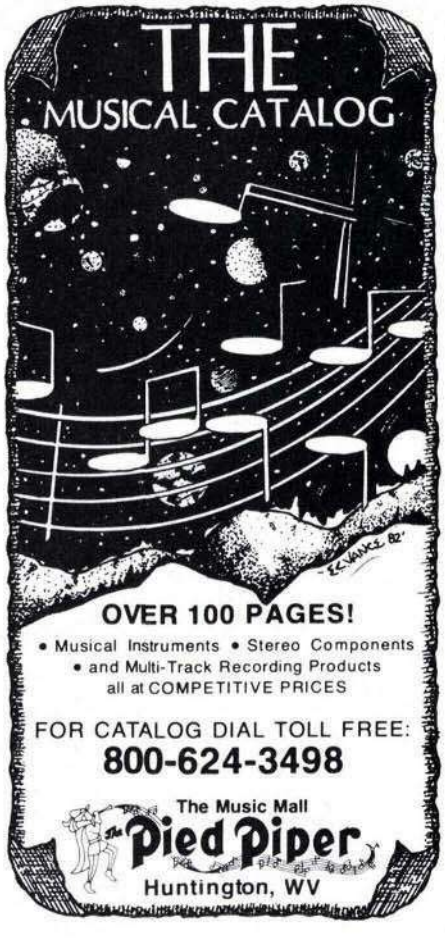
Listen to "Love Rain Over Me," from the *Quadroplienia* LP. A piano intro and tapes of rain and thunder are backed by Moon's dark lines played on tympani, lower toms and gong. It is a very much orchestral percussion approach with ever-present crescendos on the suspended cymbals, which plunges into a rocky, six feel. Moon really carries the tune along to the cacaphonous climax that Townshend was looking for. The bass drum work is especially nice since they are not played as one, as Moon so often liked to do: there are ruffs between bass drums and snare, and other subtleties. This is Moon at his best.

He is also in fine form on many of the live takes available from your local record dealer or bootlegger (don't worry, Townshend checks them out too). Long versions of "My Generation" pause for tasty sixteenth-note breaks on both bass drums. While most drummers descend down their toms, from high to low pitches. Moon always was comfortable going either way depending on Townshend's and Entwhistle's orientation. Towards the middle and later '70s Moon often wore headphones so that he could precisely lock-in to the pre-taped synthesizer work. In all his flailing and spontaneity, Moon was a model of concentration and rapid reflex action. In an interview published by *International Musician and Recording World,* which hit the stands the month of Keith's death. Moon remarked that many drummers go through the routine but fail to add color: "They don't paint with the kit. That's what I like doing. I like painting, adding color and effects and shocking people. Constantly, while I'm playing, I'm thinking two bars ahead. That gives me a chance, if I'm in the middle of a roll, to do something I've already thought out so I can get out of the roll. . . ."

Keith Moon has left quite a legacy. In rock music the drums are no longer relegated to the background, either on stage or on record. Now, the drums are frequently mixed just below the vocals.

And Keith was one of the first to show us that a rock drummer could be every bit as free in interpretation as his jazz counterpart. Furthermore, he showed us how to make full use of the rhythmical and tonal capabilities of the drumset. Perhaps he was a little ahead of his time. Most of the rock music produced today features very basic drum parts. But then, it takes a little time and perspective before lessons are learned; and it would be unwise to suggest that all music demands the sort of expansive playing that Moon injected into Townshend's songs.

Moon has been replaced in the Who, in spite of the instruction on the cover of *Who Are You* which shows Keith sitting backwards in a chair stencilled "Not To Be Taken Away." But Keith took himself away; his passing was the natural culmination of a life bent on material pleasures, all this when Townshend and the rest of the Who were displaying a change in spiritual direction. Moon, the least mature member of the Who, was trying to change; he was involved in the working of Shepperton Studios, in movie work, and of course in his greatest love, the Who. But his usual pattern of self-medication caught up with him: he died of an accidental overdose of a drug prescribed to alleviate the effects of alcohol withdrawal. It is ironic that he would have to fulfill Townshend's cry to the younger generation, "hope I die before I get old."



by Mark Van Dyck

Time Players vs. Feel Players

Which does music need most? To be emotional, or metrically steady? Any cross-sampling of musicians will yield a lot of dissension, and a lot of "sometimes something works, sometimes it doesn't." Steady tempo and emotional fluctuation of that same tempo, seem to be mutually exclusive, yet. the best rhythm sections manage to pull both off simultaneously.

How do they do it? The answer is simple yet complex. It's one of those gray areas in which conflicting opinions exist. Since this is the case, this article will probably stir some controversy. The fact is, there are elements of workable answers in several different corners. The attempt here is to lay down a theoretical model that encompasses the overall picture.

There are moments in most musical styles when the entire group of musicians will either accelerate the tempo, or retard it to achieve some emotional effect. The vast majority of situations, however, tempo must remain steady for the various parts to sound as a coherent whole.

In contrast, solo performers have it easy. You will be hard pressed to find a guitar player or pianist doing a solo gig who does not fluctuate tempo from verse to chorus, or chorus to bridge, or anywhere else the mood might hit. They are often unaware of what they're doing. Yet many of them are so used to hearing and feeling the songs the way they're performing them, that they will swear up and down they have perfect meter.

Expanding upon that idea, it becomes necessary to distinguish between our *subjective opinion* of what we play, and what we are *actually* playing. If years of experience have taught me anything, it is that *the way one sounds to himself during a performance is rarely the way he sounds to others.* It is even rarely the exact way he would sound to himself later, on a recording of that same performance. In other words, things are not always as they seem.

Feeling in a song is often established by fluctuations in tempo, while a steady flow is established by solid meter. Both must coexist. In a properly working band, some of the musicians are playing solid meter (keeping fluctuation as small as humanly possible) while others are stretching and shrinking the pulse, sometimes ahead, and sometimes behind the rest of the band. The *steady* players usually comprise the rhythm section while *the fluctuating* players are usually the lead instruments and vocalists. While the steady rhythm-section players concern themselves with rhythmic precision, the fluctuating players concern themselves more with the feeling and phrasing of their individual parts than with the band's metric unity. As a result, the lead instruments and vocalists will often leave the beat altogether.

Within the rhythm section itself there are also deviations from the straight and narrow conception of the pulse, though these deviations are much more minute and require much more precision.

In theory, the beat is simply a point in time without any width. In actual practice, the beat has dimension; that is, there is a front, a middle, and a back. A good rhythm section will make use of all three facets.

There are several other facts that must be recognized. The first is that no two musicians hear the beat in exactly the same way, or at exactly the same time. The second major fact is that the beat does not exist in and of itself. It exists wherever the players themselves say it does. Third, any one player's relation to the beat (whether he is in front of it, on it, or behind it) is determined solely by his relation to the other players in the rhythm section (whether he is behind them, with them, or in front of them.)

The distance between an instrument in front of the beat and one on the back of the beat, is usually about the same as the distance between the first and second strokes of a tightly played flam. Correctly played, this tiny distance remains in constant tension to define the location of the beat. It is similar to two cars driving side by side down the freeway at fifty-five miles an hour. Only a few inches of bumper places one, the slightest fraction of a second, ahead of the other. Neither is speeding up nor slowing down. The leading edge of the first car is simply several inches in front of the leading edge of the second car as they travel down the highway.

A fourth major fact of rhythm section interaction is also apparent. You cannot play on top, behind, or on the beat. unless the other players let you. This is where everyone's subjective hearing of the beat comes in.

Let's look at an imaginary rhythm section attempting an imaginary song. Suppose the drummer feels the song in a particular way that happens to place the drums on top of the bass line. Suppose also that the bass player feels the beat in a manner which places the bass on top of the drum line. What is left is a lousy sounding rhythm section that will probably speed up as both drummer and bass player *leapfrog* to get in front of one another. Furthermore, each will probably blame the other for rushing because each sounds right to himself. The real problem is that they hear themselves in a manner that conflicts. Conversely, when they settle into a steady realtionship that feels good to both, it is said that they are in the groove, or pocket, and the song will sound much better.

On the flip side of the same coin, a song that slows down is often caused by several players jockeying for position behind the beat. To get there, the members of the rhythm section end up playing leapfrog in reverse, each trying to get into position at the rear of the beat.

When relative placement within the beat conflicts, it can cause a band of individually strong players to sound weak. On the other hand, if the chemistry for placement within the beat is right, even a band of strictly average players can sound very good.

Most popular music is performed with the drummer occupying a position behind the beat established by the bass player. This practice is so widespread, that anyone who has read many interviews of top bass players will recall the occasional remark that the only correct place for the drummer is behind the beat. In the full diversity of modern music, however, objective analysis shows that the relationship between rhythm instruments varies, not only from band to band and song to song, but also within songs.

Indeed, anyone who grew up playing rhythm and blues with horn bands is aware that the drummer can successfully occupy a fluctuating spot (as the "feel" player) within the confines of the rhythm section, and end up playing what is termed, "lead drums."

In this type of situation, once a groove

is established, all of the instruments in the rhythm section, except the drummer, maintain their position in a constant manner. They fill the role of the *time* player.

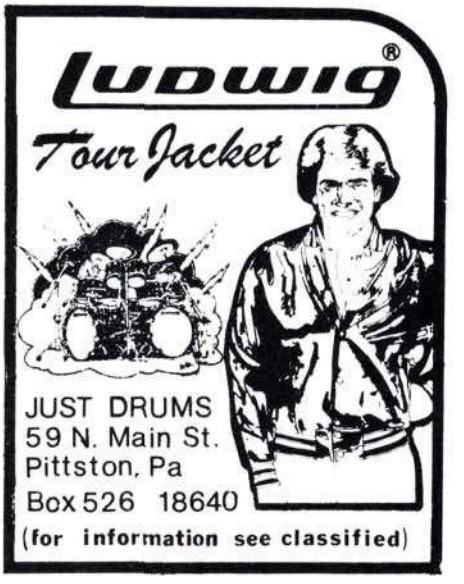
The drummer, on the other hand, creates and controls the excitement and tension throughout the song by jumping from the back of the beat, to the middle or the front, and back again, depending on the need of that particular section of music. When it is done in the right place at the right time, and the rest of the rhythm section cooperates by staying put, this technique sounds great. When it is done at the wrong time, or without the proper interaction within the rhythm section, it stinks.

Many rhythm sections today build around the drummer establishing a steady, non-fluctuating beat. In effect, he ignores the position of the other players and simply plays a metronome-like tempo. This allows the other players in the rhythm section to align themselves on top of, with, or behind the drummer according to their own feel for the song. The drummer thereby performs the role of the *time* player while the others can perform the role of the *feel* player at their discretion. However you choose to do it, a good rhythm section will have players taking charge of each function. The vast majority of the time, it is an unstated, unconscious relationship that everyone simply falls into by natural inclination. It is important to remember that the *time* player cannot budge in his playing of the beat no matter what *the feel* player does, or the whole song will lose its groove and tempo.

Everyone has his own natural tendency regarding hearing the beat, and maintaining the meter. The better musicians have taught themselves to hear and play in various parts of the beat according to the individual requirements of each song and of the other players in the rhythm section. Yet, no one is a machine. No one will hear or perform exactly the same way two nights in a row. That's why a band can sound great one night and flat the next, even though everyone is playing the same part both nights. It is often not their individual performances that are changing, as much as their relationship in the beat to each other.

These relationships were taught to me many years ago by Herb Remington, one of the fathers of steel guitar. Whenever show sets had to be alternated with dance sets, Herb would demonstrate his tremendous skill by alternately causing audiences to dance and then sit as he manipulated his position within the beat. He could literally make them flock to the dance floor, or return to their tables through subtle fluctuations in his role as lead and rhythm instrument, taking the part of the consumate *feel* player. For that to work, it was absolutely necessary for the rest of the rhythm section to maintain a constant and steady beat, thereby allowing Herb to alternately jump from behind, to middle, to front. How does one learn to recognize the varying positions within the beat? This is difficult for most musicians to consciously differentiate at first. With practice, you *can* become good at determining the top, middle and back of the beat. Recorded music is a good place to start. Listen to the overall feel of any song and determine, in your mind, the beat as you feel it. Next, isolate the instruments one by one by mentally tuning out the other sounds. Notice whether or not the instrument in question is actually being played ahead of, with, or behind the beat you previously established in your head. The more you do this, the better you'll become at it and the better you'll be able to recognize and control your own placement within the beat. One thing you will probably notice is that many drummers on recordings today play behind the beat. Most usually jump to the middle of the beat for fills and accents, and return to their previous position behind the beat.

Be patient with yourself. Learn to hear what is actually going on in the music you listen to and perform. Some songs will feel better one way, while others require different placements within the beat. The groove, or pocket will change according to the song and the particular feeling you are trying to achieve with it. The individual style of the other players, and the way they are hearing the beat that particular night, will also affect it. The more you know and understand, the better you'll be able to play.



by Sharon Geller
and John Earl Maberry

Butch Ballard

Far from being an overnight success, Butch Ballard, like many prominent figures in the music business, sprang from very humble beginnings. Born in 1918, he spent his early years in the rough and often impersonal streets of Philadelphia. But Butch grew up in a highly disciplined home, under the supervision of strict parents.

Butch first took an interest in drums at age eight, inspired by local parades. By the time he was 12, his interest in drums had developed so keenly that he constructed his own set made from discarded objects. Butch played on these drums until he was about 15, at which point his father went to a pawnshop and bought him his first set of professional drums. At this time. Butch began taking drum lessons from Professor Coles, who was as strict about music as Butch's parents were about his home life.

At age 16, Butch got his first taste of professional playing when he sat in with Herb Thornton's band. Ballard's uncles. Buster Brooks and Bill Harris, were members of the band. One night during a dance at the Frankford Boys' Club, where Thornton was playing, his uncles asked Butch to sit in and play a number. Young Butch was petrified and although he didn't really want to, he let himself be talked into it. Shortly after that. Thornton fired his drummer and hired Butch.

Ballard went the usual route of joining the school band, but maintained professional ties outside of school. Butch and some of his friends joined a 14-piece band called the Dukes Orchestra which often made as much as one and a half to three and a half dollars per night working from nine until two.

After leaving the Dukes Orchestra in 1941, Ballard was invited to New York by Lucky Millinder. Once in New York, Butch made it a point to hang around with those established in the music business. "When I came to New York, I met these different guys that took me under their wing and said, 'Why don't you go over here or go over there and sit in so you can get that exposure.' You *have* to get the exposure out there for the right people to hear you."

This eventually presented Butch with his first substantial opportunity. "Big Sidney Catlett told me that Cootie Williams was forming a band like Duke Ellington's," remembers Ballard, "so I went down to the rehearsal hall and I saw 99 sax players, 99 trombone players—all auditioning to get the job. This drummer sat in, that drummer sat in, and then I got my shot. As luck would have it, the number he called out was "Airmail Special," and I knew it because the Dukes used to play it. So I felt right at home. Then we went on to play some blues, and I was nervous, but after I got past the first chorus, I was okay. About two weeks later, I got a call from his office saying that I'd been hired for the job. I almost fainted."

Butch stayed with the Cootie Williams band doing some traveling through the middle and southwestern States until he got called into the service in 1942. After being released from the Navy in 1945, Ballard returned to Philadelphia for a short time and played local clubs before going back to New York. Once in New York, he again set out to familiarize himself with the jazz music business; who was playing, who needed players and what bands were around. His routine consisted of playing until three or four a.m., then jamming 'til eight or nine that same morning, sleeping the rest of the day, and playing again that night.

While in New York, Butch worked with Arnett Cobb's and Lucky Millinder's band. Then he got called to do a recording date with Louis Armstrong. As Butch fondly recalls, "Louis was such a beautiful guy. All my experience with the other bands made working with him so easy. He was such a sweet man to work with. He seemed to project and instill warmth—he wanted you to be relaxed and play."

Butch also worked with Illinois Jacquet's band for about a year. Ballard then began to tour the country with Eddie "Cleanhead" Vinson in an almost non-stop touring circuit.

Between 1947 and 1948, Butch had his own band called the Butch Ballard Band. When that broke up in '48, he joined Mercer Ellington's band. By that time, he had already established himself as a competent and reliable jazz musician noted for his enthusiasm and technical ability. His reputation was such that when Shadow Wilson, the drummer for Count Basie's band, left to join Woody Herman's group, the Count personally called Butch to offer him the job. Butch accepted without hesitation and lost no time in getting out to California.

The chance to replace the great Rossiere "Shadow" Wilson was a special treat for Butch because Wilson had been his idol since Ballard's early days in Philadelphia. Ballard maintains that no other single person had more of a direct and lasting influence on his playing ability and grasp of the percussion arts.

"He gave me some pointers. At times he would let me sit down and play drums with the band. I was learning how to read then, and getting my chops together musically. He helped me so much that when I got with the big bands I knew how to set up a figure with the brass section, how to shade and go softly with the reed section, and how to shade and get down on the piano player. It's the difference between technique and flair. It added a little "oomph" to it. And Basie appreciated that little extra in a drummer."

Around 1950, Basie decided to reduce his band to a sextet. At this time. Butch received a phone call from Duke Ellington. "Duke had heard about me through his son, Mercer, whom I had worked with. Duke said, 'I'm going to Europe . . . would you like to go with me?' I sputtered with shock and replied, 'Would I like to go with you? Are you kidding me? SURE!' So I went and it was just magnificent. I enjoyed every bit of it.

"It was great working with Ellington because you'd go on the bandstand for the first show and do it one way and then for the next show, he might change it all around. You had to be on your toes all the time because you never knew what he was going to do next.

"The similarity between Basie and Ellington is that both started off most of their numbers with a piano lead. But insofar as the music is concerned, the whole format is different. When I was with Ellington's band, we played numbers that were much more challenging, where you had to really apply yourself musically to achieve what he wanted.

"One very important thing I learned from Ellington was to always be alert to what he was doing and keep my eyes on

the bandleader at all times. Jazz is so fast and intricate that one player not paying attention can throw the entire band off. It is especially important for the drummer to be aware because he sets the pace for the rest of the band. This is something I try to instill in my students. I don't mind telling a student something once or even twice, but if he doesn't pick up on it by the third or fourth time, then I know he's not paying attention.

After Ballard left the Ellington band, he played here and there with a multitiude of smaller "big bands," including Charlie Shavers, Ray Bryant, Eddie Haywood, and many others. This kept him busy for the better part of the Fifties, until he once again formed his own band called Butch Ballard and the Balladeers.

Though Ballard is at heart a jazz musician, he saw the practicality of having a band which could play any type of music. "I learned through experience," remembers Ballard, "that if you were going to work the nice clubs, you had to have a versatile group. If you wanted to work consistently, you had to do a lot of singing and show tunes and feature everybody in the band, but not play too much jazz. Since the majority of people don't understand or appreciate jazz, you could only shoot a little jazz in here and there, in between the other numbers."

The Balladeers were together for about three and a half years and did quite a bit of travelling. However, as much as Ballard enjoyed touring with the Balladeers, it proved to be not quite as lucrative a venture as he had hoped. "Between taxes, agent fees, buying uniforms, travel expenses and trying to pay the guys good money—because I always wanted to surround myself with top musicians—it just didn't work." So Butch decided to play it smart and cut his losses. He went back to being a band member—not a band leader.

Ballard drifted into one of the biggest society music outfits in the Philadelphia area, called The Music Associates. When he went to apply for the job, he was told to bring a resume. Not having one, he figured he'd just go down and talk to Bobby Roberts, the man doing the hiring. During the interview, Ballard said, "I see you've got the *Encyclopedia of Jazz* over there. I'm in it." Bobby took the book down, opened it up and said, "Hey, I don't need a resume. This is better than a resume. This is beautiful. Nothing you could tell me is any better than this."

Ballard stayed with the Associates for twelve years, and although he eventually grew dissatisfied with the limited scope of party music, he made a lasting favorable impression on the talented Bobby Roberts. As Bobby recalls, "Butch was an exciting, inspiring part of my orchestra. Why? Because anybody who played for me had to have more than just talent—he had to have *extreme* talent. But aside from being a great musician. Butch was also a sincere person. You know, every musician has a certain amount of ego, but the thing that I remember most about Butch was that he was always putting other people ahead of himself. For instance, he was always the first to ask if anyone in the band needed help carrying their instrument. That's just the type of person he is. And he was always so happy. You know, most musicians have such a serious look on their face when they're playing their instrument. But not Butch—he always had a big smile on his face, grinning from ear to ear. You could tell that he was really having a good time with the music and that he enjoyed playing those drums more than anything else."

Photo by Vince Volker

But even the amount of money couldn't compensate for the fact that Butch was losing touch with himself as a creative musician and as a jazz performer. "After a while," Ballard recollects, "I felt deep within me that I was losing my innermost feelings because I wasn't expressing myself. I didn't get a *chance* to. Eventually, it got to the point where I wanted to quit. At the end of the next pay period, I handed my notice to Bobby. I explained to him that I needed a change: 'I'm not getting a chance to play the way I want to play. The financial part of it is great, Bob, but there's something else to music—something that I've put into it all these years that I don't want to lose. I need to make a change.'

"At that point, Bobby said, 'I think you're crazy.' Well, he might have been correct. But I had other feelers out at the time. I left the band and started back into the clubs again. I was working six or seven nights a week—*all jazz."*

But this was now the mid-Seventies and Ballard was no longer a young man. The demands of jazz were perhaps more of a strain than he remembered. His doctor cautioned him that since his blood pressure was higher than normal, he had better curtail some of his activities—either cut down playing every night or running around with his growing number of students. Ballard chose a moderation of the two. His gigs became less frequent and the number of his students was sculpted down to a select few.

At present, Ballard devotes the majority of his time to his students. He teaches about four to five private students daily and a group often at the Goodman studio on weekends.

The friendly and personable Ballard, who has won the respect and admiration of his peers, is also greatly admired by his students. Says one of his advanced students, "As a teacher, he's good—real good. And the reason he's good is because he knows what your capabilities are and he takes you one step further. In that way, music never becomes boring because he always has you reaching out for something which, initially, seems impossible, but *ix* attainable through hard work. And he *definitely* makes you work hard! His knowledge of music and his vitality makes learning from him a real challenge."

But would Ballard give up his playing for his students? "Truthfully. I would rather play, but economics being the way they are, a musician has to have more than one thing going. Understand, if I was just teaching all day, it would be fun because I enjoy the kids, but in order for me to let out my inhibitions, the playing part is therapy for me."

Though Ballard has enjoyed a long life filled with many exciting events, there are still some dreams he has not yet realized. As Butch muses, "Music has been so good to me. From now on in, I'd like to devote my time to teaching and playing jazz concerts. I'd also like to be able to pick the jobs I want to play, instead of going out and working myself to death for some other guy. I've been to all the heights so now I hope I can continue playing jobs with guys I really enjoy working with. Would I like to retire? Retire to what? I would go crazy sitting around the house all day looking at the dumb TV. That would bore me to death. You have to keep your head active and your heart in your music. Being around your peers and working with guys who are beter than you is a challenge. It keeps you on top of things and makes you smart. If you work all the time with inferior guys, you don't improve; you don't grow. And it you don't keep growing, you die . . . inside.

"I guess what I'd really like would be to take a tour of Europe with a nice little jazz group. And then maybe take a sabbatical to Africa because I also want to learn the various polyrhythms and logs.

"And after that?" Ballard smiles reflectively, "Who knows? I'm still young."

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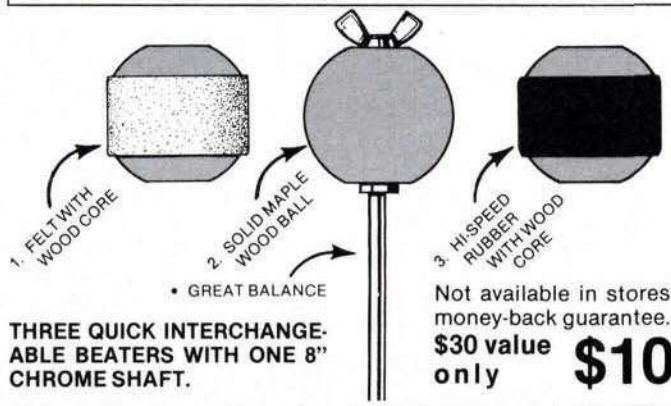

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Rock History *continued from page 21*

whatever we brought here, we wasn't men enough to handle. We wasn't men with ourselves."

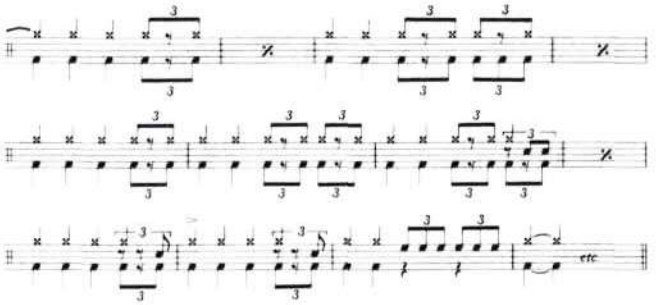
I asked Fred Below if he felt The Aces were more influential on rock and roll than Muddy Waters' band. His answer, different from what many people believe, is enlightening because it makes sense: "The Aces had nothing to do with it. Not no rock and roll. The group with Little Walter was kind of unique. The first group was with David and Louis and then they quit. The next group was with Robert Jr. Lockwood and Luther Tucker. Rock and roll didn't even come out until after the Little Walter group almost busted up. So that didn't have nothing to do with it. It was rhythm and blues. At that time we were playing rock and roll with Luther Tucker and Robert Jr. in 1952 or '53, not knowing what we was doing, 'til what we was doing became very popular. That was Little Walter, Robert Jr., and Luther Tucker. The Aces, with Louis and David Meyers, were playing altogether blues in a different style. And Robert Jr. and Tucker came in and changed a little style there and we was playing something else."

I asked Below when he noticed the change to a straight-eighth note feel on drums. "That was back in 1953. A lot of places that we used to travel, the people was catching on to what we was doing. Then where there used to be places where it was very segregated, they started changing it over where the whites and blacks would be able to mix. And all this was back in 1953.

"The drums really had a lot to play in the evolution of the music. It's just like in a modern jazz band. The better the drummer is, the more he knows, the better the music sounds. See, you've got headliners like Gene Krupa. Buddy Rich, Art Blakey. Art Taylor, and Kenny Clarke—that's in the jazz. Those are the heavy guys that other drummers in that type of music look up to. Well, in the blues it's the same way. It's just never been to a point where anybody really took a look. Everybody thought they was doing it right but they weren't. When I first started with Little Walter and we used to travel and were making records, every tune that we put out was a hit! And it was a hit because nobody at that time that was playing blues was really no headliner. They never thought that a harp and some guitars and a drum would sound and do the kind of music we was doing. We was playing the big auditoriums, man. stadiums and things like that, just with the three amps. That's all. And they was small, not no great big room-size amps. Small amps!

"We used to go into very segregated white towns in the South and in the North, too. We'd be just surrounded with white youngsters and they'd be sitting right there trying to learn, and see, and watch, and do everything that we was doing, and try to understand the music. Because a lot of the stuff that we was doing was just plain old country stuff but we'd what you call 'jazzed' it up. And the only reason we jazzed it up is because a lot of the little things I used to stick into the music to change it! I was doing that because I knew jazz myself—and that's what was happening."

In 1953 this band recorded "You're So Fine." This is the first time we hear a shuffle rhythm. On "Blues With a Feeling," an exceptional piece of music and a perfect example of a slow, 12-bar blues, Below's ride cymbal is carrying the music. His bass drum is usually in unison with the cymbal. Below gets a chance to display some of his jazz roots in "Off The Wall." He uses a lot of tom-tom fills, plays busier than in most other tunes, and uses dynamics very well. "Tell Me Mama" features more Below ingenuity, striking a woodblock with his right hand and the snare with his left.

"Blues with a Feeling"

The sound of "Too Late" will be of interest to fans of The Doors, particularly around the *Morrison Hotel* era.

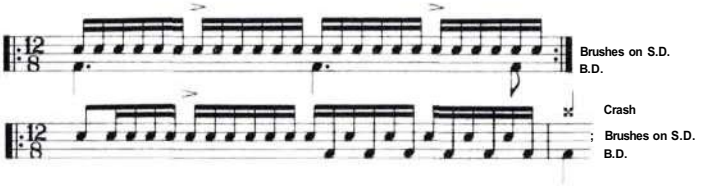
Willie Dixon started recording with the band in 1954, and his authoritative bass playing freed up the whole band. The song "Blue Lights" is an exemplary blues record. Dixon is the anchor that allows Fred Below to be more explorative. By 1955, Below had his own style well under control, and he knew exactly when to lay into a backbeat and when he could be looser and play with a jazz feel. "I Got To Go" has Fred playing with a very fast-tempo ride beat on a closed hi-hat; the two beat on snare while the four and the and of four is played on the same tom-tom.

1955 was also the year Walter had a hit with "My Babe," which has been recorded many times since. Below is on brushes, keeping time on the snare with accents on the two and four. Background singers are used on this great record, and we begin to hear the transition from blues to rock and roll. Other songs during this time period that Below stands out on are "Boom Boom, (Out Go The Lights)," "Little Girl," "Who," and "Fast Large One."

In 1955, Muddy Waters, Jimmy Rogers, Otis Spann, and Fred Below recorded with the predecessor to Little Walter in harmonica development, Sonny Boy Williamson. Below actually recorded with Sonny Boy intermittently until 1961. "Don't Lose Your Eye" in '55 features Below with some high-tuned drums, playing very loose. The band includes Willie Dixon on bass.

In 1957, Williamson, Below, Dixon, Robert Jr. Lockwood and Luther Tucker recorded "I Don't Know." This is an excellent example of tight blues ensemble playing. Nothing fancy—-just playing the right things at the right time! Later that year, with Otis Spann added on piano, the group recorded "Born Blind." The lyrics "You've been talkin' about your woman. I sure wish that you could see mine. Everytime the little girl start to lovin', she brings eyesight to the blind," were rewritten and used in "Eyesight To The Blind" in *Tommy,* The Who's rock opera.

Below displays some excellent brushwork on a medium tempo blues "Sad To Be Alone" recorded in 1959.



Odie Payne does brushwork on "Let Your Conscience Be Your Guide," also in 1959.

While Willie Dixon was expounding on the merits of Below and Payne, he added, "You couldn't skip out Al Duncan because Al Duncan was raising hell in those days. He came in way after Below and Payne because he came out of Kansas City."

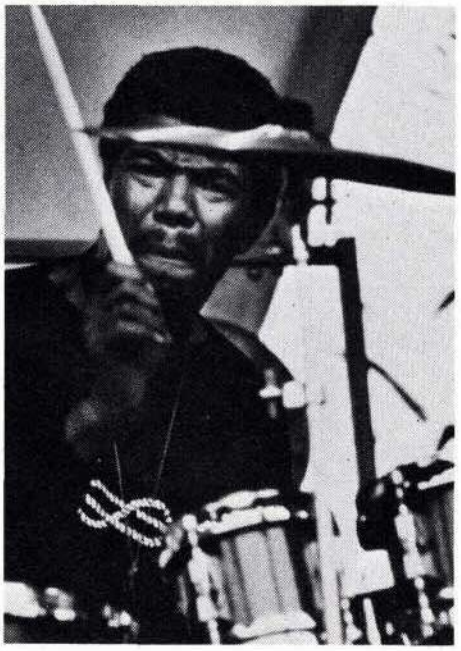
Al Duncan is presently living in Los Angeles. "My era started around 1958 or '59 when I came to Chicago from Kansas City. I came there with Jay McShann's Orchestra. We had just put out a hit called 'Hands Off,' in 1955." After speaking with

continued on next page

A PAISTE PROFILE

Jack De Johnette

« Special Edition »



Born 9.8.1942 in Chicago. Studied piano from age 4 for 12 years. Started playing jazz piano professionally at 14. Got into drums at age 16, had a love affair with them that's still going on.

I've been very fortunate in that, I've performed with many great jazz artists of the world such as Jackie McLean, John Coltrane, Miles Davis, Betty Carter, Thelonious Monk, Sonny Rollins, Bill Evans, John Abercrombie, Keith Jarrett, Dave Holland, Richard Davis, Kenny Wheeler and many others.

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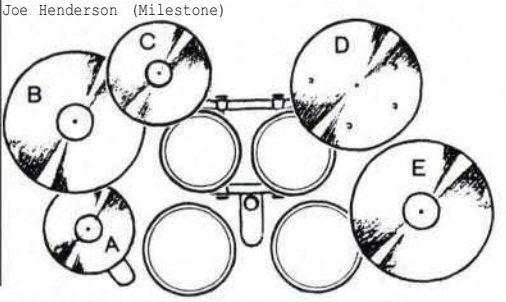

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"The Professional Edge"

some people at some of the record companies that were just starting, Duncan decided to stay in Chicago. "I got in on practically all the beginning Vee Jay rock records, and most of Chess's beginning stuff. Then I just freelanced all the way with just about every company you could name.

"A lot of them people that I was recording with—I didn't even know their names. I was pretty busy. I'd go in the sessions, do the session, leave out of one studio into another. A lot of the people I recorded with didn't quite make it big. Then, a lot of them didn't make it at all! I worked with Chuck Berry, but I didn't do too much recording with him."

Like most of his contemporaries. Al Duncan was coming from a jazz background. "I prefer jazz. I got off on the rock thing and it was paying off, so I stuck with it. I worked with Basie and Duke for a short while, but most of the stuff I did around Chicago was all with rock cats. I wound up in the Regal Theater with Red Saunders Orchestra as house drummer for two and a half to three years. Back in those days they had black theaters for the black artists who had to work the black circuit. By being the house drummer I got to play with just about everybody you can name back in those days: The Miracles. The Temptations, Marvin Gaye. Everybody came through there."

> Howling Wolf—born Chester Burned—has had great impact upon the course of blues in the years following World War II. His early recordings—often derived from the work of older musicians of the Mississippi delta region—possessed an almost overwhelming power. He established himself as an individual and powerful performer in the modern rhythm-and-blues style. His music has worn well. It seems less affected by the exigencies of the commercial record world than that of any of his peers, and it retains to this day much of the dark, burning force of his early recordings.

That proceeded an interview by Pete Welding in *down beat* magazine in the Sixties when Howlin' Wolf was still alive. Wolf came from a rural background and it wasn't until 1948 that he formed his first band with two guitars, a harp player, a piano player and a drummer named Willie Steele. This band recorded in Memphis for Sun Records when it was primarily a blues label, and those sessions were leased and later sold to Chess records in Chicago.

Chess signed Wolf to a contract and in the winter of 1952. he moved up from the south to The Windy City. "I left the other guys back in West Memphis and came up to Chicago by myself—they was afraid to take the chance. I sent for Willie Steele but he had to go into the Army, and he decided to make a career of it. He's still in the Army."

Howlin' Wolf was active from 1953 until the mid-Sixties and recorded songs that were covered many times in the Fifties. Sixties, and are still being done today. Some of the more familiar titles are "Smokestack Lightning," "How Many More Years," "Little Red Rooster." "I Ain't Supersitious." "Do The Do," "Built For Comfort." "Three Hundred Pounds of Joy," "Killin' Floor," "Forty-Four," "Evil," and "Sittin" On Top Of The World."

He used many drummers during those years: Fred Below. Earl Phillips, Sammy Lewis, S. P. Leary, Sam Lay, Junior Blackman, and Clifton James. We know a great deal about Fred Below, Clifton James will be discussed later in this article, and I was unable to contact or get any information on Earl Phillips. Junior Blackman. and Sammy Lewis. Sam Lay might be better known to MD readers as the first drummer with the Butterfield Blues Band, and we'll discuss him further in the Sixties.

Of his own music, Wolf told Pete Welding: "I went to school for my chords and positions on guitar after I got (to Chicago). See, I didn't know my positions when I was playing those slow blues, but over the last few years I went to the Chicago Music School and they taught me my positions. Some of those numbers are just on one chord. There's no changes to them: that's something I got from the old music."

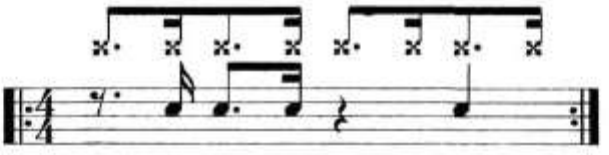
S. P. Leary played drums with Wolf (among most of the other blues musicians at that time) and recorded with him from 1957 to 1959. "I played jazz when I first started off but mostly on blues tunes. Most of the jazz I played was when I was in the Army with Cannonball Adderly and his brother Nathaniel. Junior Mance and those guys. But since I've been back out on the streets I've been playing the blues most all my life. I'm just a blues drummer. Period. That's it.

"I worked with Muddy Waters for about fourteen years, and I played with Wolf for about nine years. I was with one to the other. They kept me in a crisscross. I always had a style of my own. Either they liked it or they didn't like it. A bandleader's going to let you know what they want you to do. All you have to do is do the job they want you to do. I never had too much trouble with either one of those fellows."

When asked what drummers influenced him. S. P. said. "Art Blakey, Louie Bellson, and Gene Krupa. Art Blakey is my favorite drummer then and now. I want you to understand that very clear. Blakey gave me my first pair of drumsticks, man, when he was playing with Billy Eckstine. I think I was fourteen or fifteen." As for a preference between blues and jazz. Leary said this: "I like them both, man. I like them all. I can go all the way back from hillbilly music and Dixieland stuff. Playing the blues is complicated for some fellows. I didn't have no trouble. Art Blakey saw to that. Do your thing. Do *your* thing. In other-words, you're not supposed to lay up there and be Gene Krupa or Buddy Rich or Max Roach! The main thing that you have to thrive on is to drive a band. See, I'm a driving drummer. A driving blues drummer. I play things that the jazz drummers cannot play. Take "Hoochie Coochie Man." I don't believe you could take Max Roach and put him up there to play that. Or Buddy Rich!

"I don't think I had a real tough time because of T-Bone Walker. He was my god-father. He used to come pick me up when I was fourteen years old and take me with him to play. I listened to things that Art Blakey or Louie Bellson would tell me. I was raised up by guys that was older than I am. so it wasn't no sweat."

Howlin' Wolf's best recorded works were from 1953 until 1964 on Chess records. On "Forty-Four" and "Spoonful" the drummer is playing a shuffle rhythm on a closed hi-hat and accent on the snare. There was a noticeable lack of ride cymbal use in Wolfs music. On "Killin'Floor," Clifton James seems to be playing a cowbell and tom-toms simultaneously.

"Back Door Man" will be of interest to those who are familiar with the version recorded by The Doors.

The sound of the whole band on "Three Hundred Pounds" is a much more polished sound than most of Wolfs other records. "Three Hundred Pounds" is one of those recordings with tight horn arrangements, a crisp Latinish beat, that foreshadowed the rock and roll to follow. Sam Lay was on drums.

Bo Diddley came along as a contemporary of Chuck Berry. *The Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock* called him "One of the key figures in the development of rock music. His first single, 'Bo Diddley,' a self-composed anthem to himself, released at the same time as Chuck Berry's 'Maybellene.' was a major

U.S. hit in 1955 and introduced one of the most basic and famous rift's in rock music." That riff came to be known as "The Bo Diddley Beat." It is an infectious rhythm that has been used over and over again. The drummer that recorded some with Diddley and toured most of the time with him was Frank Kirkland. who is now dead. But. to find the drummer on the original Bo Diddley records was a detective mystery.

I asked Willie Dixon, who answered: "That was Clifton James. When Bo Diddley first came to the Chess studios he was with Clifton James, and they had been working in the street together. That was in the early '50s. I was on all those sessions for Bo Diddley on Chess. That actually was Clifton James' idea of a beat more than it was Bo Diddley's at that time. But. after Bo Diddley got strung out with it and got named with it. why. he just had to keep it up. Out of all the different drummers that Bo Diddley ever had. he never had one that pleased him more than Clifton James.

"See, when they first came to the studio to record. Bo was more interested in selling himself with his particular style of playing an instrument. But. when we went to recording it—by mixing the two of them together, they had such a beautiful thing that one was actually no good without the other. Cliff had this beautiful style. They had been working all up and down the street, passing the hat. and they just had it down together. And Clifton James would insist on putting a lot of things in there that I don't think Bo was accustomed to at that particular time. But it set in there so beautiful that we started featuring that drumming. And that drumming, along with the lick that Bo Diddley had. made it a beautiful beat. It was a working thing together, but Cliff. I think, was the instigator of that particular beat.

"He had a way of getting the proper sound. Most people get on a bunch of drums and they don't tune their drums. This guy

continued on next page

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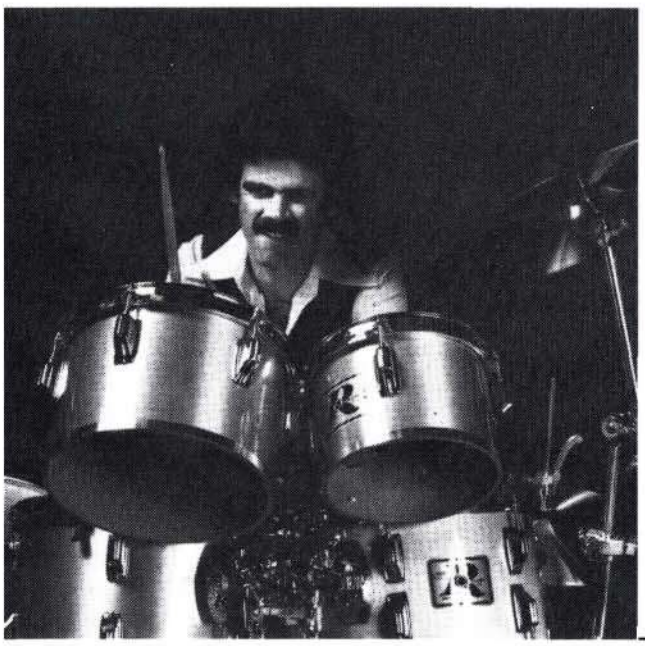
David Garibaldi



Born in Oakland, California, November 4, 1946. I began playing drums in 1956 while attending grammar school. My professional career started at age 17, at which time I was involved with several different musical situations that greatly contributed to my later efforts with "TOWER OF POWER" and other artists. It was in 1970 when I joined "TOWER OF POWER" that I began seriously developing a style.

During the last ten years I have also performed and recorded with many other artists, ranging from Hoyt Axton to Joe Henderson.

Currently I'm freelancing, teaching and writing the "Rock Perspectives" column for Modern Drummer Magazine.

DISCOGRAPHY:

-EAST BAY CREASE
Tower of Power (San Francisco
-BUMP CITY
Tower of Power (Warner Bros.)
-TOWER OF POWER
Tower of Power (Warner Bros.)
-BACK TO OAKLAND
Tower of Power (Warner Bros.)
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Tower of Power (Warner Bros.)
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-LIVE AND IN THE LIVING COLOR
Tower of Power (Warner Bros.)
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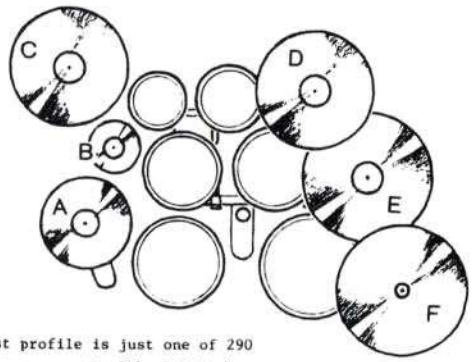
20" Heavy Ride, 2002
Cup Chimes, 2002 (No. 6+7)



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came up tuning his drums. I remember a couple of sessions where we wondered what he was doing. But, after he got it together, he could play around the drums with the sticks and play certain tunes. That's when we really realized that he had something cooking for him. One drum would go high, the other low, and the other was medium. They had beautiful tones to them."

Mr. Dixon gave me a number where he thought I could reach Clifton. I called the Ace Hose & Rubber Company in Chicago, left the MD phone number, and the next morning Clifton James called. He was a beautiful person over the phone and was kind enough to spend some time from his work to talk about his association with Bo Diddley.

"I'm his original drummer. We started out together. I'm the one that gave him that beat." How did that beat develop? "I don't know. It just came to me. I met Bo and we started playing together in clubs here in Chicago for little or nothing. Matter of fact it *was* nothing! Five and six dollars. Crap like that."

Sometimes Clifton wouldn't use a hi-hat cymbal in the studio and concentrated more on his tom-tom work. He was influenced at that time by "Max Roach, Gene Krupa, and Cozy Cole. But, I had my own ideas."

Clifton has been performing recently in Chicago with Bobby "Blue" Bland and Little Wolf, Jr. "I had really stopped playing," he said. "I don't play no more really. They're trying to ease me back into it, but I don't think I'll go. The money's not right. There's been a couple of tunes I recorded with Bo that I got my session money, but I didn't get any royalty money from the records that I wrote. So, this is what kind of turned me off too."

Jerome Green, the maracca player with Bo. was an integral and important part of his sound. It's interesting to see and hear how he and the drummers used to work off each other rhythmically. "Jerome was playing with us the whole time when we was making them little four and five dollars a night. That was the original band. We called ourselves Ellis McDaniel and The Hipsters." Clifton recalled.

Fred Below spoke with me shortly after the conversation with Clifton James and made this statement: "You know the tune called 'Bo Diddley?' Well, the beat was mine. But I didn't make the record. We used to work around with Bo over there at the 708 Club when Bo Diddley first started playing. We used to get on the bandstand and play it. Then it got so good that Bo Diddley said, "Well, let's (record) it.' A lot of the guys got most of that (tom-tom) work from me because I played the tom-tom all the time."

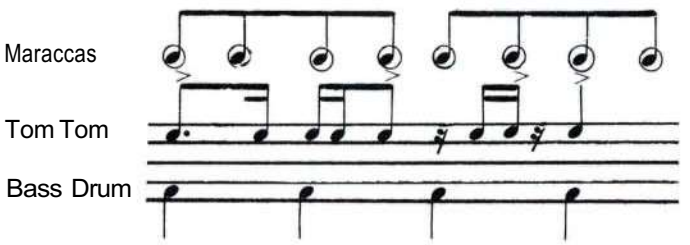
I'd asked Clifton James if he'd associated with other blues drummers in Chicago at the time. "Yeah, I did. The only ones would talk most would be me and Below. He was my favorite. That's my partner, man. all the way. When we would talk and trade licks mostly is when I'd meet him. like up in a club or something where he'd be playing. Then we would exchange questions. And sometimes in the studio." When asked to describe his style of drumming. Clifton said. "I never really did want to play like nobody else. Because if I did that then that wouldn't be me! If you play like somebody else then it's not you. I wanted my own thing; my own style of playing."

The classic Bo Diddley songs are "Bo Diddley." "I'm a Man," "Mona," "Who Do You Love?" "You Can't Judge A Book By It's Cover," and "Road Runner." According to the *Illustrated Encyclopedia of Rock:* "Both (Bo Diddley's) songs and sound were covered extensively, and in the British beat boom, with many going to R&B sources for their material, his work was extensively plundered. The Rolling Stones put "Mona" on their first album. The Yardbirds recorded "I'm A Man," and Eric Burdon & The Animals revived "The Story of Bo Diddley."

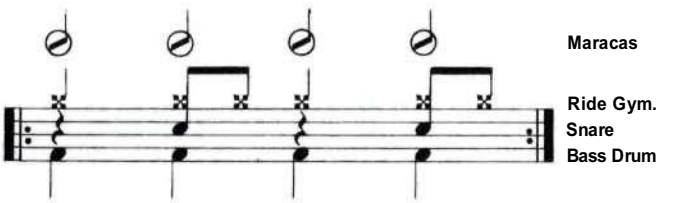
On "Bo Diddley," notice Clifton James' tom-tom work with

Jerome Green on maraccas. In "I'm A Man" the maraccas are sometimes in unison, sometimes counter to what the drummer is doing. Quarter notes on bass drum. On "Pretty Thing" there's a variation on the Bo Diddley beat. "You Can't Judge A Book By Looking At The Cover," is a standard blues beat. Maraccas and cymbals are playing opposite each other. It works. On "Who Do You Love," Bo had a very raunchy sound. A classic rock beat.

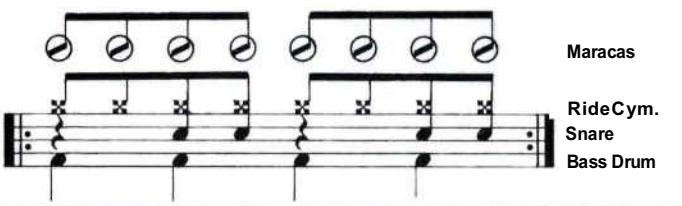
"Bo Diddley"



"You Can't Judge a Book"



"Road Runner"



"Who Do You Love"

Chuck Berry has often been overlooked, especially in recent years, for his contribution to rock and roll. In 1953, Berry was leading a blues band in St. Louis. "His gimmick was to cut the blues with country-influenced humorous narrative songs." In describing Berry's music and influence, Robert Christgau wrote ". . . Berry's limited but brilliant vocabulary of guitar rift's quickly came to epitomize rock 'n' roll. Ultimately, every great white guitar group of the early Sixties imitated Berry's style. Berry was the first blues-based performer to successfully reclaim guitar licks that country and western innovators had appropriated from black people and adapted to their own uses twenty-five or fifty years before. By adding blues tone to some fast country runs, and yoking them to a rhythm and blues beat and some unembarrassed electrification, he created an instrumental style with bi-racial appeal."

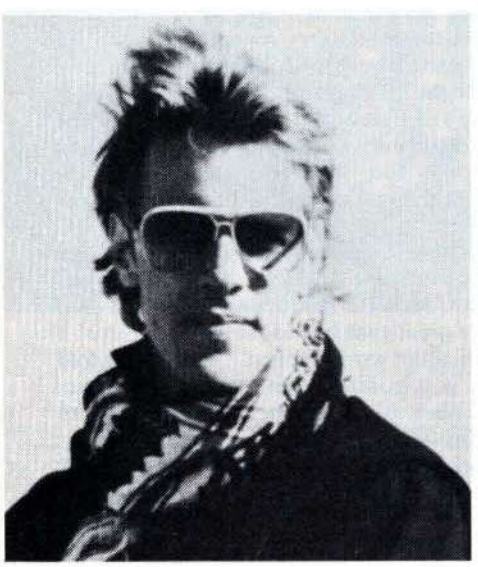
Chuck Berry came to the attention of Chess Records through Muddy Waters, and Berry recorded his classic material from 1955 to 1958 at Chess. The first session included drummer Jaspar Thomas and Bo Diddley's maracca man. Jerome Green. Not much is known about Thomas other than that he was from St. Louis (the same as Chuck Berry) and a few of the heavy Chicago blues drummers remember him. "Maybelline" has Thomas playing basic backbeat drums and Green playing maraccas on top in the same manner he played on Bo Diddley's records. Likewise on "Thirty Days." In 1956 Fred Below shows up on "Roll Over Beethoven," "School Days," "Too

continued on next page

A PAISTE PROFILE

Stewart Copeland

«Police»



Born in Virginia, USA in 1952. I grew up in Beirut. My father's job took the family to many countries including Lebanon, where I learnt to speak fluent Arabic.

At 13 I had decided to become a rock drummer. My father, who had been trumpeter with "THE GLENN MILLER BAND" sent me to various local drum teachers and in England I also studied with Max Abrams.

I've worked in other jobs including those as disc jockey, magazine publishing and tour manager.

In the mid-seventies I played in the group "CURVED AIR".

In 1977 I formed the band "POLICE" and we played our first gig at Rebecca's Club, Birmingham in March that year.

As well as drumming in the group I also sing, write and play guitar, piano and kazoo.

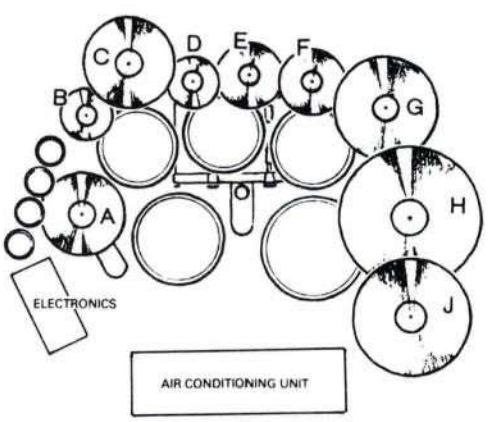
"POLICE" have up till now enjoyed many hit records and have toured world-wide.

My hobbies including photography and movie-making and my early influences were the "JIMI HENDRIX EXPERIENCE" and Bela Bartok.

I am currently experimenting with RUDE CYMBALS live and the FORMULA 602 PAPERTHIN and PAISTE 2002 CRASHES in small sizes for studio work.

DISCOGRAPHY:
-ZENYATTA MONDATTA
The Police (A&M)
-OUTLANDOS D'AMOUR
The Police (A&M)
-REGATTA DE BLANC
The Police (A&M)
-FALL OUT
The Police (Illegal)
-CAN'T STAND LOSING YOU
The Police (A&M)
-ROXANNE
The Police (A&M)

PAISTE SET:
A 13" Medium H-H, FO 602
B 8" Bell, 2002
C 14" Crash/Ride, Rude
or 16" Medium, 2002
D 8" Splash, 2002
E 11" Splash, 2002
F 12" Paperthin, FO 602
G 16" Thin Crash, FO 602
H 22" Heavy, FO 602
or 22" Ride/Crash, Rude
J 16" Crash/Ride, Rude
or 18" Medium, 2002



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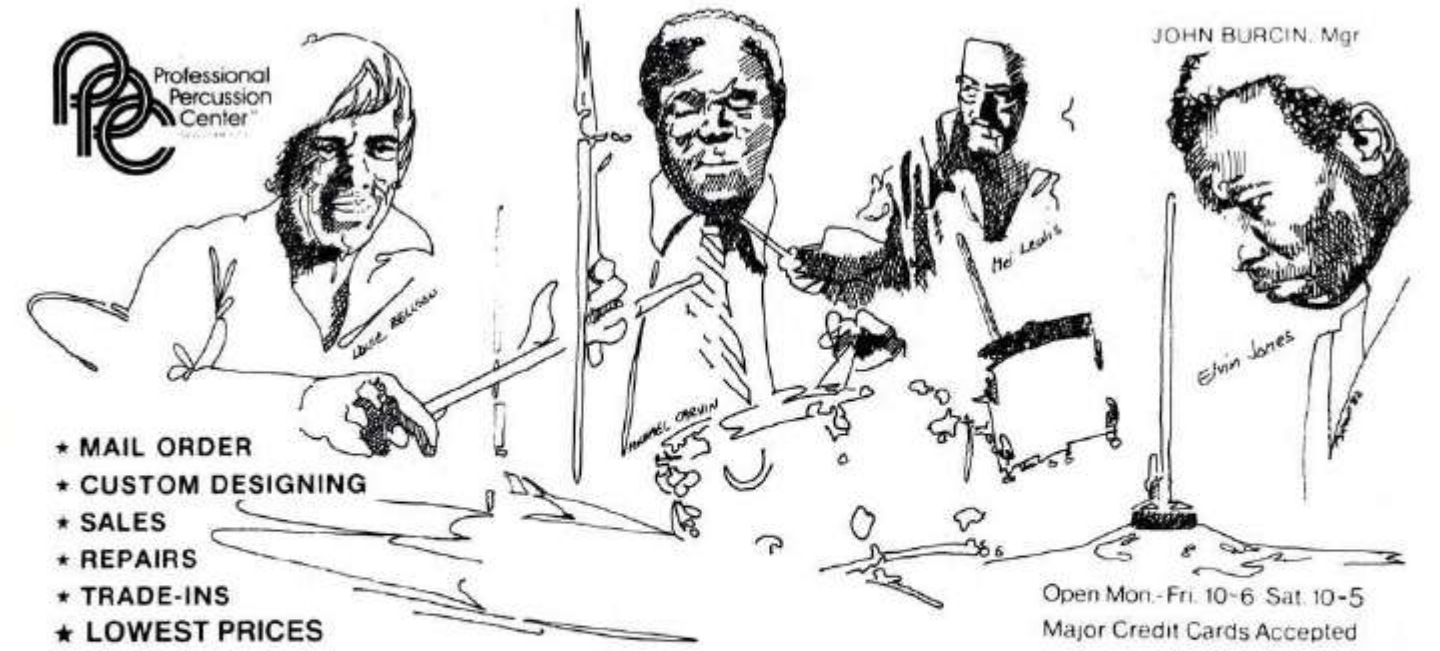
PAISTE

"The Professional Edge"



Jayne Ippolito's

PROFESSIONAL

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Much Monkey Business," and "Brown-Eyed Handsome Man."

Below adds a touch of sophistication to the drumming. His sound is cleaner than Thomas', and he adds more fills (tastefully) to complement what the rest of the band is playing, and to add more color to the music.

In 1957, Below is *still* listed as being the drummer on "Rock And Roll Music." "Johnny B. Goode." "Oh. Baby Doll," and "Sweet Little Sixteen." In searching for who-played-what on the Chuck Berry records, I ran into a few conflicting reports. Willie Dixon was the bass player on these sessions and he said: "Well, on the first session I'm practically sure it was Below, and I think Al Duncan got in on a couple of Chuck Berry sessions, too." So I asked Al Duncan, and h*e* told me this: "I didn't do too much for Chuck. I worked with Chuck but I didn't do too much recording with him. I can't remember who Chuck's drummer was. I did a couple of things with him but I'm not sure what they was." And Fred Below said: "I think I was on the first session. But, 'Johnny B. Goode'—I didn't do that one."

Odie Payne said, "I only played with Chuck Berry on two sessions. Personally, I think I know *you* better than I do Chuck (and this was the first time Odie and I had ever spoken). When I came into the studio I never met the man before. I was on "School Days" and then a year or two after that he made a session. I know they had a couple of drummers. I was on one of them, but I forgot the name of that tune."

So with that mixed bit of information, the *sound* of those varied drummers, and my *ears,* I put on *Chuck Berry's Greatest Hits* to try to come to a conclusion. Al Duncan admitted, "I did so many things at that time that I can't remember none from the other" and I think it's safe to assume that most of these other drummers have similar memories. Also, they didn't realize at the time that they were recording music that was destined to become classic rock and roll. To them it was just another session.

But in 1957, Below plays some amazingly musical drums. The sound of his drums (if it *is* Below) is much "fatter" and deep sounding on "Rock And Roll Music" than on any other Chuck Berry record. Actually, it's "fatter" and more deep sounding than on *any* of the blues records he played on. During the B section he does some nice cymbal and/or cowbell work.

"Johnny B. Goode" is the first Berry recording where the cymbal is used throughout the whole song. There's no riding on the hi-hat. According to the discography supplied by Chess records, the drummer is Fred Below, but according to Below it isn't him! Sound-wise it could easily be Fred, and since he was the drummer on those other four hits (plus other recordings with Berry) during 1957, it may be a session that Below forgot about.

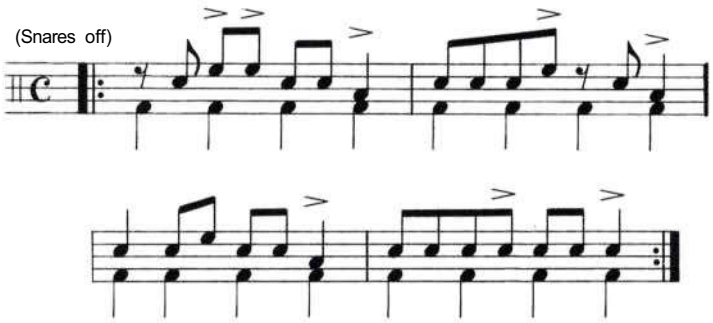
On the Rolling Stones' last tour, guitarist/songwriter Keith Richards was interviewed in *Creem* magazine. The writer asked him if he still listened to Chuck Berry. Richards said, "Yeah, sure. I've got everything great that he's done with me now. I carry it with me." To which the writer replied. "Somebody told me the other day 'How is it possible that after twenty years (Keith) still listens to Chuck Berry for new ideas?' " Keith Richards said, "That's answered by 'Why do a certain number of new young bands wanna play and sound like the old Stones?' The reason is the same. It's something that you're brought up with and lived with . . . it's part of your life. There is no reason to get rid of it. It's not something that you get sick of after a few hearings. That stuff is timeless."

On "Sweet Little Sixteen," Below drops in a fill around his drumset that became a standard fill for drummers in the Sixties. This song was lyrically rewritten and recorded as "Surfin'

USA" by the Beach Boys in the Sixties, and I believe the drummer used the same fill as is on this record.

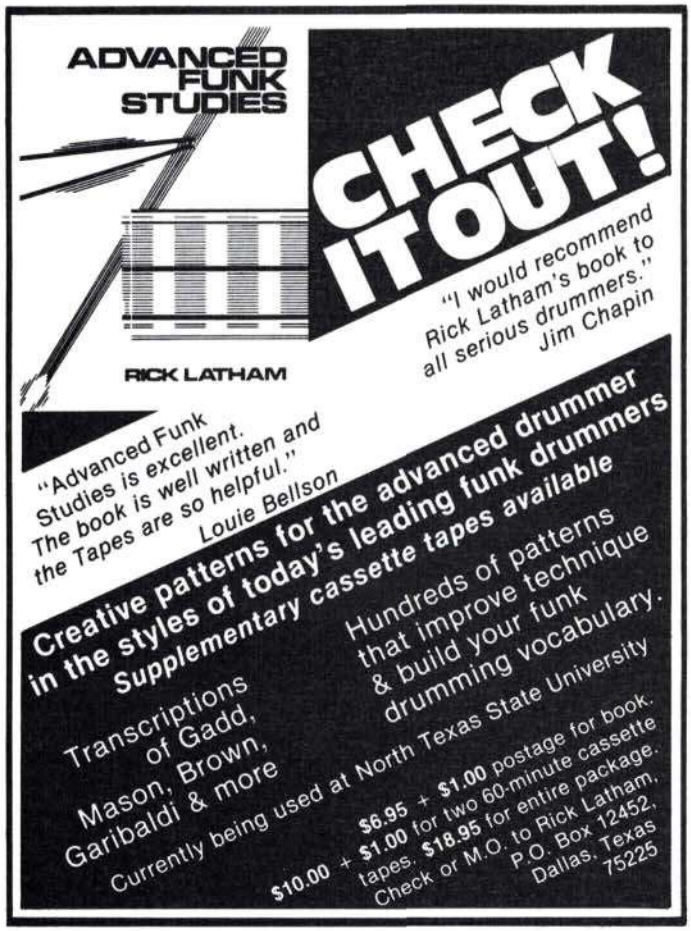
"Memphis" was recorded in 1958 and it gives us the first chance to hear the tom-tom work of Below. This entire song is played without cymbals and it's interesting to hear it and consider the cross influence between Below and Bo Diddley's drummer, Clifton James.

"Memphis" rhythms



That wraps up the blues influence to this point. We've seen how drummers progressed from being jazz drummers fitting into blues, and then developed a concept and style of blues drumming that had a tremendous impact on rock and roll.

In *The History of Rock Drumming: Part II* we'll see how country music influenced rock. From the 1935 band of Bob Wills and The Texas Playboys up until the Sixties we'll follow the drummers who played with Elvis Presley, Jerry Lee Lewis and other artists at Sun Records in Memphis. And we'll also see how blues and country blended into rock and set the stage for the explosion of music and drumming in the Sixties.



A PAISTE PROFILE

Mick Fleetwood

« Fleetwood Mac »

Born in Redruth, Cornwall, England on June 24, 1947. I started playing drums after I left school at age 14 1/2 and went to live with my sister in London, with the intention of playing music professionally. I learned to play by drumming along with records by artists like Sandy Nelson and Cliff Richards and the Shadows.

I started playing drums with Peter Bardens in a club and a band called the "Senders".

Later I formed a band with Peter Bardens called the "Cheynes", around the time the "Rolling Stones" were starting to get popular. After the "Cheynes" broke up I joined "The Bo Street Runners", then rejoined Peter Bardens in "Peter B's Looners", an instrumental outfit with Peter Green. "Looners" went with Beryl Marsden and Rod Stewart, and became "Shotgun Express", Peter Green leaving to join John Mayall's "Bluesbreakers". After "Shotgun Express" I played with the "Bluesbreakers" for a month.

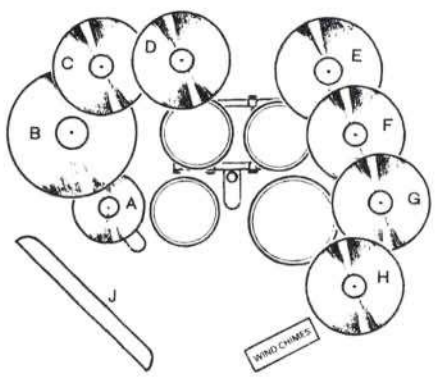
July 1967 1 formed "FLEETWOOD MAC" with Peter Green. The band has been through many personnel changes but since 1975 the line-up has been the same - Christine McVie, Lindsey Buckingham, Stevie Nicks, John McVie and myself. The band has sold over 25 million records internationally.

DISCOGRAPHY:

-PETER GREEN'S FLEETWOOD MAC
Fleetwood Mac (Blue Horizon)
-MR. WONDERFUL
Fleetwood Mac (Blue Horizon)
-ENGLISH ROSE
Fleetwood Mac (Epic)
-THE PIOUS BIRD OF GOOD OMEN
Fleetwood Mac (Blue Horizon)
-THEN PLAY ON
Fleetwood Mac (Reprise)
-BLUES JAM IN CHICAGO, VOL.1
Fleetwood Mac (Blue Horizon)
-FLEETWOOD MAC IN CHICAGO
Fleetwood Mac (Blue Horizon)
-KILN HOUSE
Fleetwood Mac (Reprise)
-THE ORIGINAL FLEETWOOD MAC
Fleetwood Mac (CBS)
-GREATEST HITS
Fleetwood Mac (CBS)
-FUTURE GAMES
Fleetwood Mac (Reprise)
-BLACK MAGIC WOMAN
Fleetwood Mac (Epic)
-BARE TREES
Fleetwood Mac (Reprise)
-PENGUIN
Fleetwood. Mac (Reprise)
-MYSTERY TO ME
Fleetwood Mac (Reprise)
-FLEETWOOD MAC/ENGLISH ROSE
Fleetwood Mac (Epic)
-HEROES ARE HARD TO FIND
Fleetwood Mac (Reprise)
-RUMOURS
Fleetwood Mac (Warner Bros.)
-TUSK
Fleetwood Mac (Warner Bros.)

PAISTE SET:

A 15" Sound Edge H-H, 2002 (Bottom with rivets)
B 26" Medium, FO 602
C 20" Sizzle Crash, 2002
D 20" Crash, 2002
E 20" Crash, 2002
F 22" Ride, 2002
G 20" China Type, FO 602
H 20" Dark China, SC
J 38" Symphony Gong



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PAISTE

"The Professional Edge"

by Darryl Jeffords

Developing Chops Through Rudimental Exercises: Part 1

Speed, control and coordination are three elements of drumming that are sometimes hard to develop. Whether you are playing in a classical, ensemble, rock, jazz, country, marching or other type of band, your success is judged, to a degree, by your ability to play with speed, control and coordination. What follows is the first part of a two-part program of exercises with these facets of playing in mind.

Many of these exercises come from top drum & bugle corps and marching bands throughout the U.S. and Canada, covering open rolls, triplets, sticking-coordination, flams and paradiddles. This doesn't mean that drummers from other areas of music won't find the program beneficial.

I'm a working drummer, and after a few weeks of practice there were noticeable improvements, thanks to this program. Many popular drummers have had rudimental experience at some point along the way. Billy Cobham and Steve Gadd, for example, both have some rudimental background. Cobham has been involved with the Blue Devils Jr. Drum & Bugle Corps and Gadd once played with a Senior Drum & Bugle Corps. If you are presently a steadily working drummer though, you probably can't even practice regularly, let alone tour with a corps, so the benefits and time factor of this program are definite advantages.

Once you are familiar with it, the entire program can be played in about 35 minutes, so there is no loss of valuable practice time. Prior to playing this first part of the program, check the key for a few tips and suggestions.

In part II of this article I'll deal with some combination exercises and a few more challenging exercises. By working this program into your practice routine you should notice some development in three to five weeks. One thing that may help to further you along is to stretch after practice. Next time I'll expand on this aspect of developing chops as well as the final ten exercises in the program.

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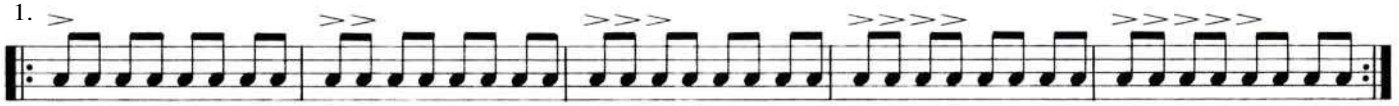
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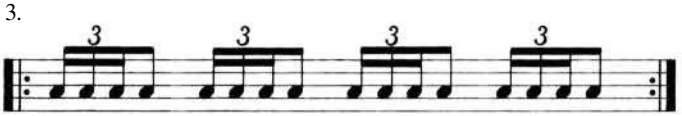
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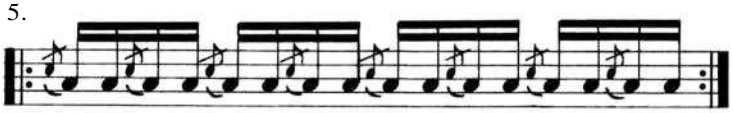
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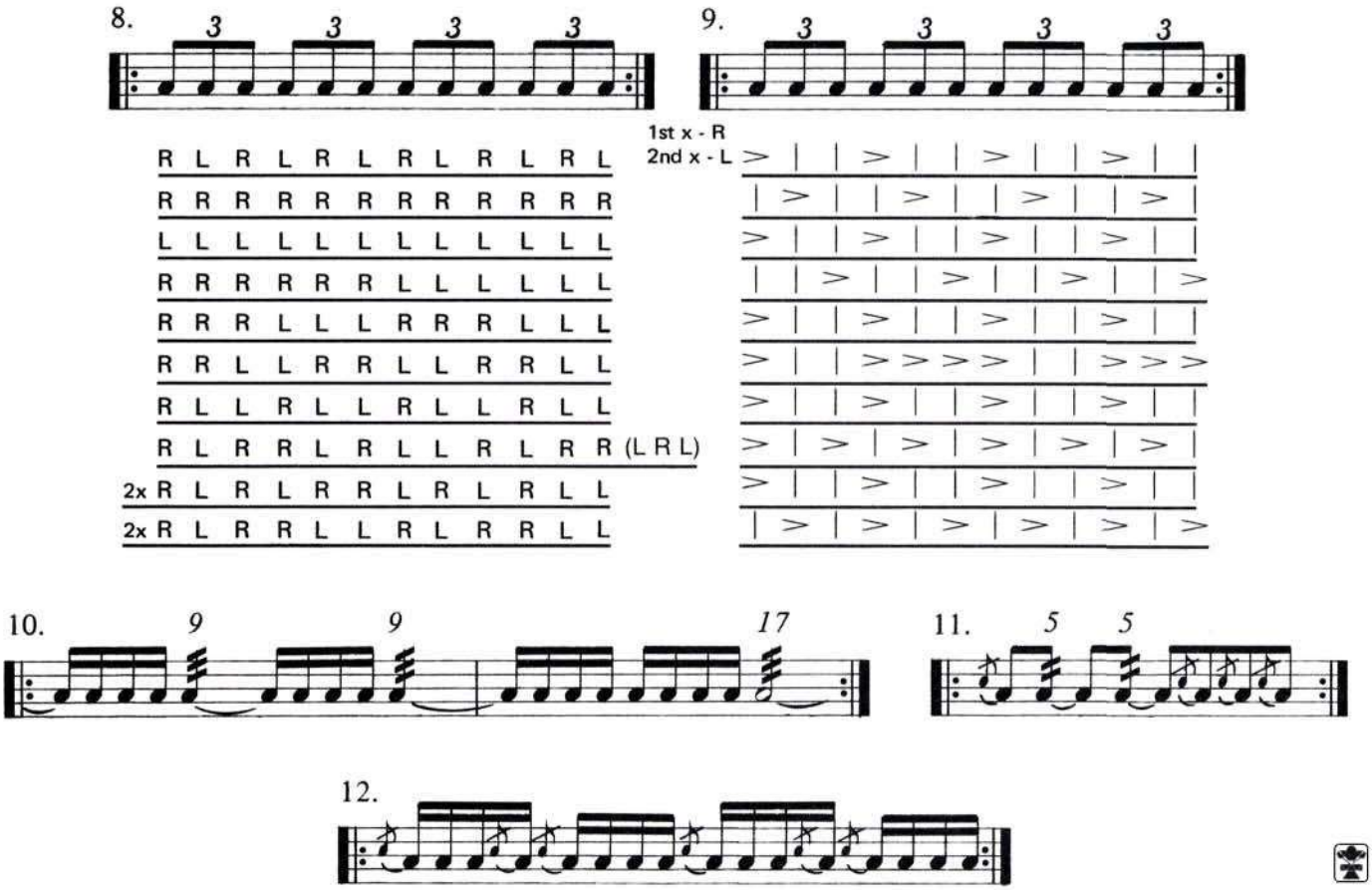

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by Rick Van Horn

Rick Van Horn at NAMM '82

I recently attended the National Association of Music Merchants Expo (NAMM) at the Anaheim. California. Convention Center. The NAMM show is an opportunity for manufacturers to display their products and for retail dealers to select merchandise for their stores. To an individual musician, a visit to the show is like being a kid in a candy store—you just look around and want *everything.* And after all. it's a lot of fun to stand looking at a huge, sparkling new drum set. allowing yourself to dream. The tricky part is to avoid looking at the $5,000 price tag while you're dreaming.

I went with the idea of reporting on useful small items and accessories (sticks, heads, hardware innovations, etc.) that I think might make the working drummer's life easier or expand his equipment economically.

STICKS

In wood sticks, the big companies like Calato/Regal Tip and Remo/Pro-Mark were of course on hand. Regal was highlighting their new, larger *Quantum* models. These are heavy sticks definitely for power playing. A newcomer in the field of premium wood sticks is the *Woozie Fisher* line offered by Hi-Skill Engineering. This is a hand-sanded hickory stick, with a choice of either a wood tip or a large, round nylon tip. They offer a nice variety of models, and list at about $7.00 per pair. I liked the feel of their *Bandito* model for club playing where the dynamic range is wide. They weren't too heavy for light cymbal work on ballads, nor too light for satisfactory power on rock tunes.

For the cost-conscious drummer using wood sticks, I recommend checking out Calato's line of *JoJo's.* These are "seconds," sticks that have some minor flaw in the grain or the manufacturing that prevents their qualifying for "Regal Tip" status. If you're very selective, you can find sticks among the *JoJo's* that are likely to be as playable and durable as first-line sticks. The *JoJo's* run in most of the same models as the Regals, at about half the list price. I'm currently using them on my gig, and saving substantial money.

Bob Saydlowski recently did a fine article evaluating synthetic sticks. Let me just add that I took a hard look at the synthetic sticks on display at the show from a couple of perspectives. First, did they sound good on drums and cymbals; could they actually prove useful from a purely musical standpoint in a club situation? Second, were they worth the very high prices at which they list, in terms of durability, uniformity, and feel in the hands?

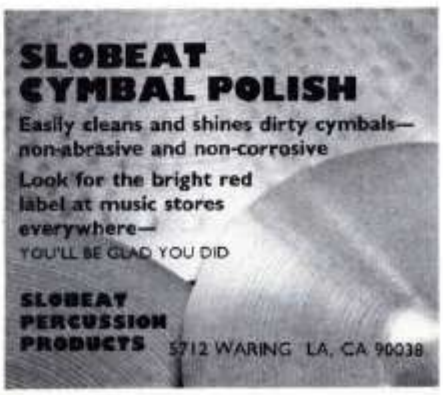
I think it's important for club players, and any drummer on a tight budget, to realize that with the price of wood going up, while the availability of quality wood and thus quality wood sticks is actually going down, the question is not *whether* to switch to synthetic sticks, but *when.* I agree with some of the sales representatives at the show that the time is not far off when the synthetics will be the standard product and wood the rarity, just as the mylar drum head has all but replaced the calf head. So it behooves the working drummer to familiarize himself with those sticks already on the market, and keep a critical eye out for new developments.

The stick brands I tried at the show included the Hi-Skill, the Aquarian, and the Duraline. Each line offers a selection of sizes and weights. For the club player, trying a synthetic stick at current list prices represents a real *investment* in new equipment. But I think it's worthwhile in light of the fact that they may outlast wood sticks by seven to one or better, making them actually cheaper than wood in the long run, and in light of the more important fact that within a surprisingly short time there may be no viable alternative.

HEADS

While at the Duraline booth I examined their *Superheads.* The display featured rows of identical bass drums, concert toms and snares, each with a different combination of Duraline heads allowing for immediate side-by-side comparison. The qualities exhibited by the heads are impressive, in terms of how they modify the drum sound and. of course, their well-known durability. The *Studio* model dramatically reduced overtones and ring in the drum, as compared to the *Concert* model on the identical drum next to it. I personally didn't care for the sound of the *Superheads,* but that's a matter of taste, and after all. they weren't on *my* drums playing *my* music on my gig. I would also like to have seen other brands of heads represented in this display to facilitate a comparison of Duraline's sounds to those of the more familiar brands.

The advantage of a Duraline head to a club player is the durability factor. The heads cost more than other brands, but allegedly last far longer with no appreciable "wear down" as can happen with aging mylar heads. If you like the sound of a Duraline, you're likely to get a lot of mileage from a single head.



HARDWARE

North Drums, the distinctive funnel-shaped fiberglass drums, displayed only one drum set, but were enthusiastically promoting their new full line of hardware. I'd definitely suggest you check them out if you're looking for new stands. They are just starting to market hardware, and state that this is in response to the fact that other manufacturers were offering ". . . so-called heavy-duty hardware at prices that were far beyond the means of the average drummer." Sound familiar? They say they offer "... a line of massive stands that are realistically priced and every bit as serious, reliable and durable as any other heavy-duty hardware line available today, bar none." That's quite a claim. I looked over the line, and it is pretty much traditionally-designed stands and booms (no multiple stacking equipment) which is adaptable to most brands of drums.

DRUM MIKING EQUIPMENT

I had received a letter from Sales Manager Mike Solomon, of Shure Brothers Inc. inviting me to come and discuss some new accessory items that might be of particular interest to percussionists.

Among the new products Mike had mentioned were isolation/shock mounts for microphones. If you mike your drums, these mounts can effectively reduce the sound transmitted to a mic' from any vibration in the stand by more than 20 dB. They are simply a circle of plastic into which a small rubber doughnut has been fitted. The mic' is inserted into the center, and the cushion of air inside the doughnut prevents any contact with the solid portion of the stand. This seems ideal for use with mic' booms which clamp directly onto drum or cymbal stands, such as Tama's hardware. I like the space-saving potential of such systems, but the familiar solid-plastic U-shaped mic' clip did allow vibration from the drums to pass through the stand and into the mic'. The Shure mounts come in two diameters: the *A53M* for small condenser-type mic's, and the *A55M* for larger types such as Shure's *SM57* or *58*. Mike was kind enough to send me one of each, and I've found that they solve another common headache: miking the bass drum without picking up vibrations from the platform or the floor on which the mic' stand is resting. Though a price list was unavailable, these are small accessory units and shouldn't cost much. For the effectiveness they demonstrate, they seem like a good investment.

I was also shown a stereo mic' adapter, designed to receive any two standard-thread (5/8"-27) mic' clips in such a way as to allow stereo pickup from one stand. This might be useful for overhead drum miking with only one boom. The part is called the *A27M* Stereo Mic' Adapter.

Mike went on to show me the *SM81* unidirectional condenser mic', which he believes to be ideal for miking, especially for snare drums. It's a high-quality mic' at what Shure considers an affordable price for a working musician. It comes with the option to install an omnidirectional cartridge *(R104A)* so as to get 360-degree pickup, as in an overhead situation. I'm not a sound engineer, and we didn't have the facility to actually demo the mic', so I mention it here as an item you might want to research if you're in the market for drum mic's.

At the Aquarian Accessories booth I had the great pleasure of chatting with Roy Burns about drumming and drum equipment. He informed me that they will soon be coming out with a new drum-miking system. It will be similar to the Elec-Trek system (now defunct for business reasons, not problems with the product) which was designed by Roy's current partner Dave Donohoe. However, the important difference will be in improved microphone technology and simpler overall design. Watch for that in their advertising soon.

ACCESSORIES

Drum Workshop are the folks who bring you the *DW-5000* chain-drive bass drum pedal, based on the highly success-

continued on next page

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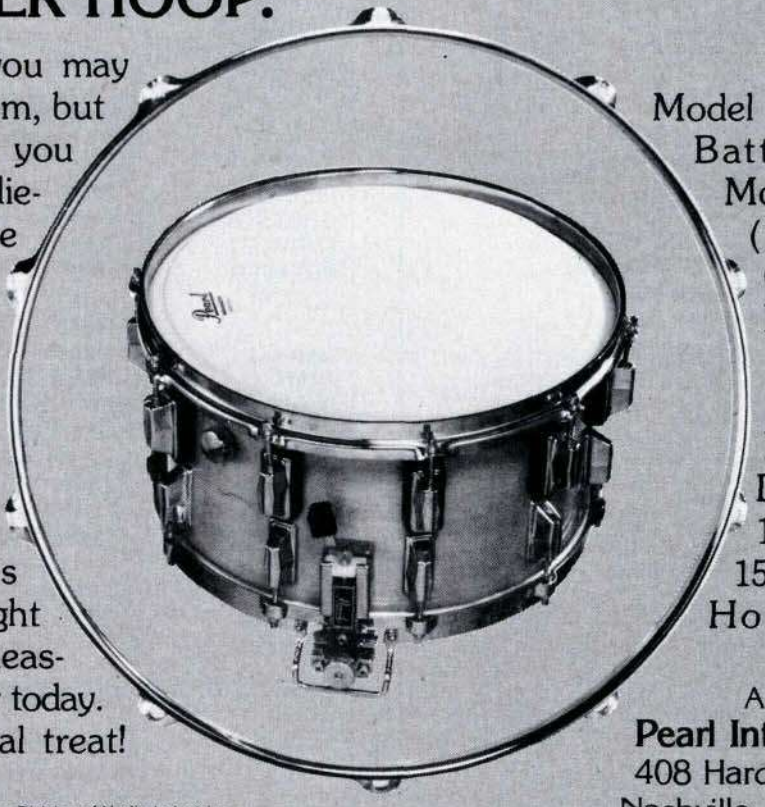

Available sizes: Model HD 1410 B (14″ Batter, 10 Holes), Model HD 1410 SG (14″ Snare with Guard, 10 Holes), Model HD 1510 B (15″ Batter, 10 Holes for Pearl Extender Snare Drum), Model HD 1512 B and HD 1512 SG (15″, 12 Holes for Parade Drums).

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ful Camco pedal design that's been around forever. They also featured their unique seat case, the only adjustable one on the market. Among DW's other useful accessories are a speed-key that quickens head changing; an excellent external tone control and a very sturdy bass drum practice pad stand. And if you do any practicing at the club, you'll want to check out their cymbal muffler. It's an elastic band that deadens the sound, while allowing you to get full stick response from the cymbal. If might be a great way to stay on good terms with the club staff and still practice on your full set.

Although DW is now making a full line of very high-quality drums, they didn't have a kit on display. They are not yet in high-volume production, but rather operate on almost a custom-order basis, and thus didn't feel that a drum display for retailers was appropriate at this time. DW is an extremely drummer-oriented, high-technology outfit operated by some very dedicated people.

I talked at length with Mike Stobie, who designed and markets the Slobeat bass drum beaters. His line features familiar wood and felt beaters, but also includes a hard acrylic ball, which gives tremendous impact without tremendous size or weight; a polymer composition ball which is softer than acrylic and flattens out against the head after a while (increasing the impact area and giving a deeper, flatter thud); and most interestingly, a cork ball. Mike says he's received many skeptical comments about the durability of the cork ball, but he's used one himself with no significant deterioration. Obviously, it's designed for extremely light playing in low-volume situations, and might be just the ticket for wedding drummers, or in a keyboard/drums duo in a small lounge. On the other hand, I'm now using the acrylic beater because I needed more punch and projection in my club situation. The advantage over wood is the same as with sticks: from beater to beater, a synthetic material can be identical in size, shape and weight. A wood beater will vary slightly due to the nature of the material, and is more prone to cracking or wear-down. Mike's beaters are not expensive, and are worth looking into if you like to experiment with'your bass drum sound. If Slobeat isn't in your local store, write to Mike Stobie, Slobeat Percussion Products, 5712 Waring, Los Angeles, CA 90038.

ELECTRONIC PERCUSSION

Although the disco era seems to be fading, the application of electronic percussion is still being explored and developed by players in all fields. Thus, club drummers, seeking to duplicate recorded sounds or create some of their own, are still in the market for drum synthesizers. With this in mind I visited the Syndrum

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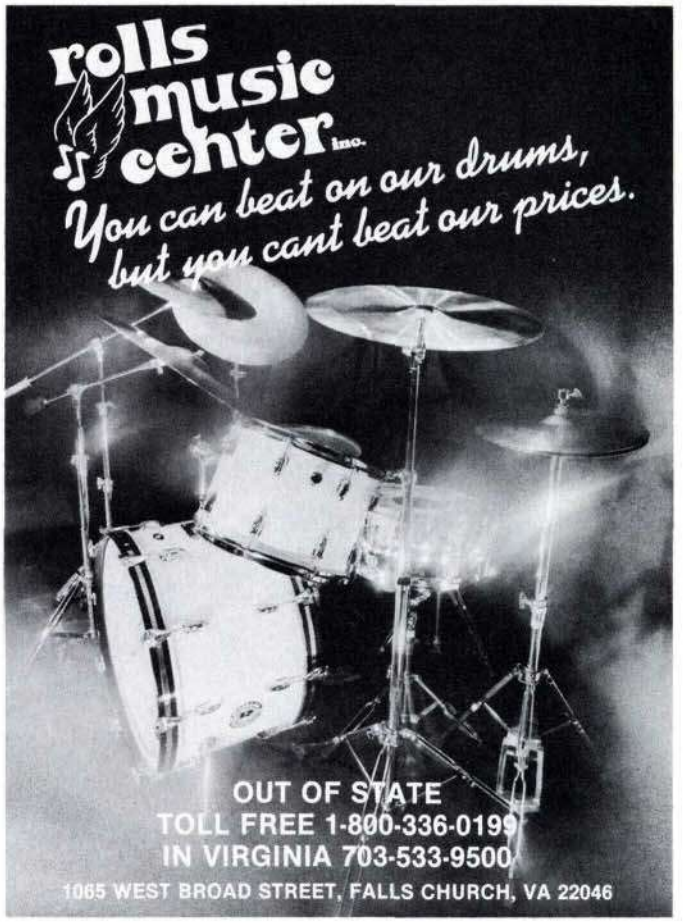

display. You might have noticed Syndrum advertising their "Factory Cash Plan." This plan allows you to buy direct from them (saving retail costs) while they pay your local retailer a commission for taking care of the delivery to you. The prices seem more competitive than a few years ago. Sales Manager Steve O'Bryan told me that although this program gives some people the impression that the company is floundering, this is *not* the case. They simply had to come up with a way to revitalize their market at the consumer level. I think it's safe to say that Syndrum is still the standard of the recording industry when it comes to drum synthesizers. If you're in the market for electronic drums, you'll definitely want to research Syndrum and the "Factory Cash Plan."

MAJOR LINES

Naturally, I couldn't visit the show without stopping by the booths of the major drum companies. But what I saw was a little discouraging. The "bigger is better" philosophy was in evidence everywhere. Tama, Ludwig, Gretsch and Slingerland all displayed power drum sets and massive hardware. Sonor's exhibit emphasized their incredible *Signature* series: incredible craftsmanship and unique woods; incredibly priced and going up again soon. I suppose these may be eye-catchers in store windows, but for the average club player, they represent a lot of added weight, extra space required, extra expense for cases, and a greater investment than might be necessary. Gretsch did exhibit some of their more traditional small jazz and studio kits, and although Rogers did display one monster kit (with 24 toms, a concert bass drum and two more on the floor) they also had a nice jazz kit set up with small drums and their very adaptable *Memri-Stak* hardware. I have gone on record as *not* being against power drums or massive hardware *where appropriate.* But I question their appropriateness in the club or casual application, and ask: *What alternative do you have for us?*

All in all I had a very exciting and illuminating day, and came away with a sincere respect for some of the innovative work going on in our industry. I hope you get the opportunity to check out some of the products I've mentioned, because many are potentially valuable additions to the working drummer's arsenal.

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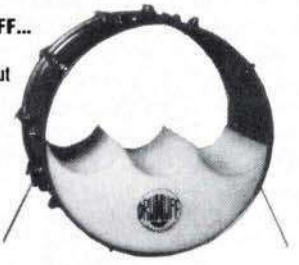

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Firth *continued from page 25*

I have other people who just do specific things. The vibe sticks are all hand-wound. The felt on the tympani sticks is all hand trimmed and tied. So we've been successful by taking a very pedestrian item and sophisticating it to the point where it's almost ridiculous. It's become quite an operation, although it's still a small business compared to some of the other drum businesses. But we're proud of what we do.

RM: Let's talk about the tympani themselves. Which aspects of their construction most affect the sound?

VF: A tympani that is light-weight never has the sound projection of a heavier instrument. I always make the remark that you never hear of a lightweight grand piano. You can't project a big, full, rich sound if the instrument is terribly light. Now when I say big, I don't necessarily mean loud. You can play pianissimo and still have a big sound, and you can play forte and still have a small sound. What I'm describing is a sound that is ever-present at any dynamic level; it touches every part of the hall that you're performing in so that everyone hears it. That's a big sound, regardless of dynamic. I've always found that you need an instrument that has a certain amount of weight to create that concept of sound. This is not only for tympani—for any drum and for many of the accessories, there's a point where a certain weight and thickness is important. Every instrument should have some construction in terms of weight that will produce the sound the player's looking for.

You can buy a lightweight car, and it will provide you with transportation, but it won't give you comfort or safety. Now a lightweight drum won't give you comfort, because it's not going to make the sound you want, and in terms of safety, the damn thing might collapse on you. I don't know what my particular tympani weigh, however, I know there's enough weight there to support what I'm doing. The minute I get on a lighter set of drums, I simply can't produce the sound that I want. Now I might make it sound good, and everyone around me might say, "That sounds good enough," but they didn't say, "It sounds great." Just, "It sounds good enough." It may be acceptable, but the first one you have to please is yourself. Does it meet your standards? Does it do what you want it to do? The toughest one to please should be yourself.

The French have a word called "timbre" which has to do with the shadings of sound. The more shadings you can produce from a given instrument, the more musically interesting your instrument becomes. You won't need ten cymbals for ten sounds—you'll get several sounds out of each cymbal. Then if you have ten cymbals, my God! You're going to be a powerhouse. But the idea is to have a minimal amount of equipment and produce a maximum amount of color and variety of sound. The weight thing is one of the important factors in the variety of sounds you can produce.

Talking about music making and musical instruments is complicated because it's all so very individualized. It's hard to tailor one thing to everybody. You can't! Let's start with our hands. Look at my hand and then look at your hand. They're different shaped hands. So what feels good in my hand would feel klutzy in yours. We have now exposed one of our differences. Now we go to the instrument, and we each choose a different one. We part a little further. Then we start to play, and your technique is a little different—good or bad, better or worse, it's beside the point. It's these partings and separations that makes the various artistry of various players different, outstanding, and unique.

RM: That brings us back to the point that you made earlier about not making comparisons between different musicians and different styles of music.

VF: Music is an amazing subject matter—the power that it has. I said earlier that music brings out a lot of experi-

ences. It's like fine art. How many people can look at the same picture, under the same conditions, and all get different reactions. When you get a few of them that get the same reaction—you've got a hit; you've got a winner. You can have an early Italian religious painting, which may be beautifully done, and I have a feeling that most people who look at it may not get a lot out of it. Then you might show that same group a beautiful French impressionistic picture, and on first viewing, they might be turned on. They might see things that would be easier to understand and relate to than the religious picture. By the same token, that group might also be turned on by a super-realistic, modern painting. Now this is where the problem comes in: If you can get that same group to appreciate the first picture, *and* the second picture, *and* the third picture, and get them to realize that there is beauty in more than one area, then you've got an educated group. They might be able to listen to different styles of music, and enjoy all of it.

RM: A lot of people don't seem willing to listen to the avant-garde music being composed and occasionally performed.

VF: You can go back historically to all kinds of music. When the Glenn Miller band started out, people thought that was the worst music anyone had ever heard, and it went on to become one of the most unique sounds in jazz history. It caught on and became famous the world over. When Stravinsky did the first performance of the *Rite of Spring,* they threw tomatoes at him! That too has gone on to become one of the masterpieces of the classical literature. So I think it's worth doing any piece of serious music well, at least once, to see what's there. It deserves to be played and it deserves to be listened to. If people want to listen to it again, then it has merit. If it gets stored away in the closet, then that's where it belongs. However, I think everything should be given a fair play, because you never know what's there. Give it the best shot, and play it to the best of your ability. It may not always be a great piece, because there isn't that much great music, but it can be a great performance. There are all kinds of ramifications that can be brought about by the right combinations of players, concepts, approaches—so you really shouldn't knock anything until you give it a good shot. Then you can pass opinion, but even then, what one person says is just one person's opinion. So if it were me, I might keep it to myself, because I've been proven wrong many times.

RM: Besides maintaining your technique, are there other physical things you do to stay in shape for playing music?

VF: I have to keep in shape like an athlete. When I get up in the morning, I exercise and then I run a mile. That's no big deal, you understand, but just to keep your physical being in shape, you have to work at it. It's a tough job to keep high standards. After you've been doing it a few years, you sort of take a lot for granted. So you have to train.

With all the drugs and booze available today, I think it's important for people to realize that to make great music, you've got to keep your head clean. That's the only way to go. The higher up on the ladder you get, and the more proficient you get, the more everybody expects from you. Everytime you walk out on stage, there's always that bunch just waiting to see if you're going to fall on your face. Your standard of excellence has to be so high, and it requires the greatest of personal discipline to get to the level where you can maintain it. Now if you want to have a musical career that swings for five years, it doesn't matter. But those five years go by in the wink of an eye. Then you're thinking about the next five. And if you've been abusing yourself for the first five, you're not going to do so well for the next five. Look at someone like Saul Goodman. He was with the New York Philharmonic for forty-six years, and he had as much spirit on the last concert he played as on the first. He is a great inspiration. And look at Buddy Rich, one of the greatest set players of all time. He sounds as fresh today as in the days with the Dorsey band.

Another thing that's good is to get away from it from time to time. I played with the Boston Pops for many years, and it was a valuable experience. But I stopped doing that about ten years ago, and I take that time to do other things, such as the sticks, developing new products, going on vacations, and just breathing some fresh air. It keeps my energies recharged. You can't do the same thing week in and week out with all this strain and pressure and not do anything else. You've got to get out and develop your personality. You've got the technique, now what do you do with it? I could teach technique to a monkey, but he doesn't have the communication ability necessary to make music. Now you get to the fine art of music making. Everybody has to go through a development stage—they have to find their niche; find what they do best; find how versatile they are; how interpretive they are; how flexible; there are many things that make a good musician. But just having great technique is not enough. Anybody can have that. But what you do with the tools is what defines the difference between a guy who puts up cement walls and a guy who sculpts like Rodin. That's the difference.

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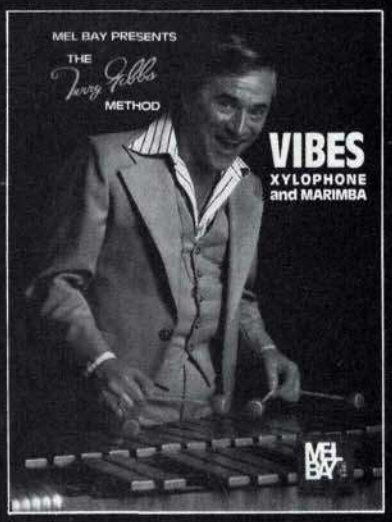

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Hall & Oates' Mickey Curry

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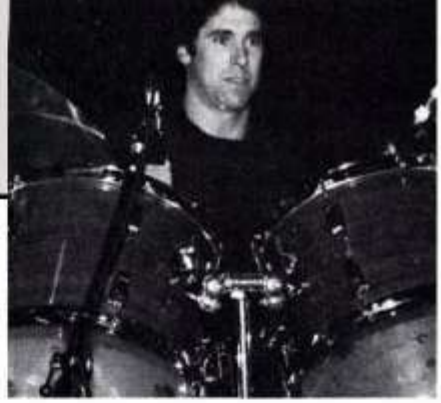

Photo by Ed Fogarty

Although Mickey Curry is not a household name, except in his hometown of Guilford, Connecticut, his years of training and perseverance have landed him in the seat with Hall and Oates, one of the hottest bunds recording today. Curry's hard-hitting, energetic style complements the creutiveness of the two songwriters. Years ofplaying in bands and in the studio worked to condition Curry's clean approach and professional attitude toward the drums.

EF: How long have you been playing the drums?

MC: Since I was twelve; about thirteen years.

EF: Do you read music?

MC: Yes, I've done some work with charts but I wind up throwing them away. I go over them a couple of times and then just do what I have to do.

EF: Did you formally study the drums?

MC: I originally just started playing; just picked up a pair of sticks.

EF: What made you decide to play the drums?

MC: I used to see the Dave Clark Five and the Beatles on television and I figured it would be too difficult to play guitar, so the drums were it. Later, when it came time for my brothers and I to take music lessons, I said I wanted to take drum lessons. My mother agreed because they were the cheapest. It was $4.50 for the lessons and $16.00 for the pad, sticks, and lesson book. I studied with the music teacher in school and he encouraged my parents to buy me a set of drums because he felt I had natural talent.

EF: Was he your only teacher?

MC: No, there was a guy in a little town about ten minutes from where I lived. He was amazing. He was the local drummer who played in all the little nightclub bands. His name was Nick Forte. He didn't limit his teaching to just the drums; he taught me about tuning, percussion, and how to play the congas.

EF: What type of set do you use?

MC: It's a Ludwig set with a 24" bass drum; a 9 x 10 power tom; two rack toms, 9 x 13 and 10 x 14; and two floor toms, 16 x 16 and 16 x 18. The snare is 6 1/2" with a Duraline head.

For cymbals, I've got a 22" ride with a real big bell that I've had since I was twelve years old. I try, but I can't break it. I also have 15" hi-hats, two 18" crashes, a 20" crash and a 16" medium crash.

EF: Why the Duraline head on the snare? Is it more durable?

MC: Yes, I can't break them. I was going through the regular heads left and right, so we put the Duraline on. It's got a great sound and a lot of crack. It's kind of hard to play, though. You have to hit really hard to get any kind of sound out of it. But that's the way I play for these guys.

EF: Is your set made of wood?

MC: The whole set is made of wood, with the exception of the snare drum. I need the big, loud crack that the wood set provides when I'm playing live.

EF: Is there any specific way that you tune the drums?

MC: I don't really spend much time on tuning. I tune the bottom heads just a hair tighter than the top heads to get more of a ring out of the drum. I like for the drums to ring when I'm playing live, so that the overtones drive each other crazy and the snare rattles when I hit the tom-toms.

EF: Doesn't this cause a problem for the rest of the band?

MC: No, because most of the time the sound engineers mix the ring out of the monitors.

EF: What kind of mic's on your drums?

MC: I use Sennheisers; they're real old. They're similar to the microphones that Mike McDonald of the Doobie Brothers uses for his vocals.

EF: You're using an electronic drum. What kind is it?

MC: It's a Syndrum and it's run through a Moog. I use it when we play "Private Eyes."

EF: Do you like using electronics?

MC: Sometimes, but it depends on what sound I'm going for. It was always hard to get a good electronic drum sound in the studio but live, I think, you can use just about anything to get a good synthesized sound.

EF: On the past couple of albums. Hall and Oates have begun to incorporate the use of a drum machine. How do you feel playing along with it?

MC: I don't find it hard at all, as long as I don't let it antagonize me. I have it coming through the monitors real loud. I named our little machine "Gene Krupa" just to somehow relate to it. But they don't sound like drums and they don't breathe with a tune the way a drummer does.

EF: Who sets up the timing, and controls the machine when you're playing live?

MC: Daryl and John set up the actual pattern for the song and John operates a foot switch to turn it on or off. I had it set up next to me on the drum riser, but I would get mad at it and kick it. so they moved it.

We just started using it live when "No Can Do" started taking off. We took one day to rehearse the song because we weren't doing it when the tour started.

EF: Are you a visual performer when you play live?

MC: No, I usually don't go crazy. I took a solo one night—I was particularly up that day, and I came running out in front of the drums, tapping real hard and fast on the mic' stands, monitors, and John Oates' head. I found out later that it was visually incredible, but you couldn't hear a thing. They said I looked like a monkey.

EF: How do you feel about drum solos?

MC: I hate drum solos. I love just grooving, but that never comes out like a solo. With Hall and Oates, I do "Wipe Out," the classic drum solo. I guess if I was a solo drummer and had my own band, like Buddy Rich, I could solo all night and the crowd would ask for more; but I'm not Buddy Rich.

EF: Who are some of your influences?

MC: When I was in junior high I used to listen to Santana, Chicago, and Tower of Power; all the funky big bands. Santana was amazing and I was awed by the fact that Mike Shrieve was only eighteen years old. But you can't forget the guys who started it all; Maurice Purtill of the Glenn Miller Band, Gene Krupa, Warren "Baby" Dodds, and Dave Tough.

EF: In your opinion, who are the premier drummers of today?

MC: There are so many guys that are so good. Jeff Porcaro is a monster; I listened to him with Steely Dan, Boz Scaggs, and Tim Moore. Jeff" is incredible. When he played with Toto, he took the finesse of a studio drummer and put it in a rock and roll band.

Stewart Copeland is another fine drummer who found his own groove that nobody can touch. I love his style of playing. He drives it into the ground.

EF: Did you have to adapt to the sound

that Hall and Oates require or are you just keeping to your own style?

MC: You always have to adapt to whoever you're working with or else you don't get any work. You can't just go out and say "This is how I play. Take it or leave it." They're going to hire you because you have a certain sound that they want. I think that's why I've been so successful in getting work in New York over such a short period of time.

EF: How did you come to be the drummer for Hall and Oates'?

MC: I got a phone call from a friend who was working with Mercury Records. He had just signed a band called Tom Dicky and The Desires and they needed a drummer, so I went down to New York to do the record with them. Now it just so happens that their manager, Tommy Mottola, is Daryl and John's manager as well and he came to one of our sessions, heard me play, and decided I would be better for Hall and Oates.

EF: What other studio work have you done?

MC: I did an album with G. E. Smith, guitarist for Hall and Oates, and Brian Adams who is from Canada.

EF: What is your affiliation with G. E. Smith?

MC: We played together in the Scratch Band, in Connecticut. G.E. is another tie I had in New York. I didn't hear from him for a couple of years and then he called me and asked me to come down and join his band. We rehearsed all summer and did a small tour that fall.

EF: Did the band cut an album?

MC: Yeah, it's called *In The World.* That album has an amazing drum sound. We recorded at the Power Station; Bob Claremont produced it. I think *Playboy* picked it for one of the Top Ten Albums of the Year, which is a fluke because nobody really heard about it.

EF: How much control do you have in the studio concerning your drum sound?

MC: I have a distinct snare sound that I go for. It's almost as if I were trying to keep on the Bonham tradition. I want a big, heavy drum that's going to cut through anything. I want my snare drum to sound like it is a foot deep. But then again, you can't tell an engineer or producer, who is probably the most important person in the studio, what you want, because he has a sound that he is going for. I've been pretty lucky as far as being satisfied with my personal taste in drum sound. So far, I've been working with people who want the sound that I have.

EF: Do you concentrate on what the bass player is doing while you're playing or do you listen to everyone?

MC: Tom Wolk is the bass player I'm working with now, and he is the only guy I have to lock into while I'm playing. You get a groove happening, and that's everything in this type of music.

EF: How important is technique?

MC: Technique is important. I don't know if it's so important that a ten-year-old kid should have to go through an hour a day with a drum teacher and get all his sticking right or flunk the course. I've always felt that if you have it—you have it; if you don't—you don't. You have to be able to carry a groove and know the difference between a shuffle and straight-four time. You have to be able to play in half-time and double-time. There are certain things you have to do just to get by.

When you are learning how to play and you have the natural ability to play drums, technique will only add to the developing of that ability. There are a lot of drummers that aren't very good at all, but are successful at what they do, just as, there are drummers who are technically amazing but just don't have the drive or perseverance to make it work for them.

EF: What advice do you have for young drummers?

MC: Learn everything you possibly can about the drums. Listen to every record you ever loved. Ask your father for his favorite records and learn them, because those people knew what they were doing.

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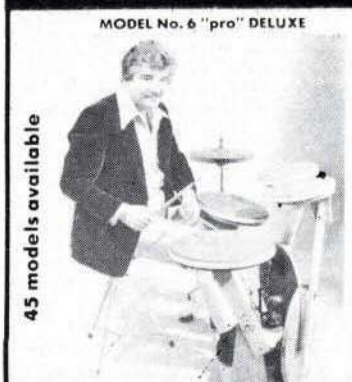

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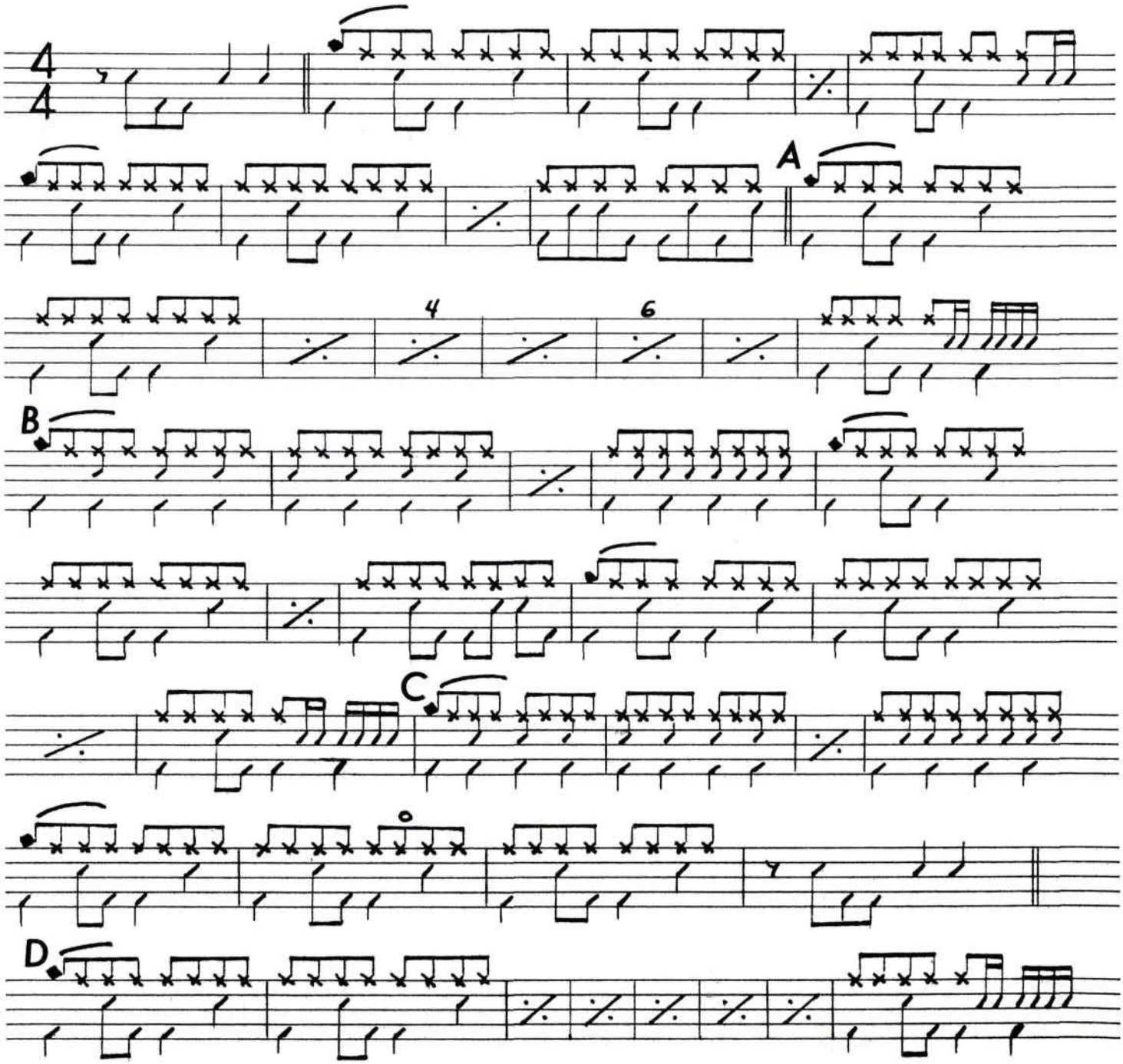
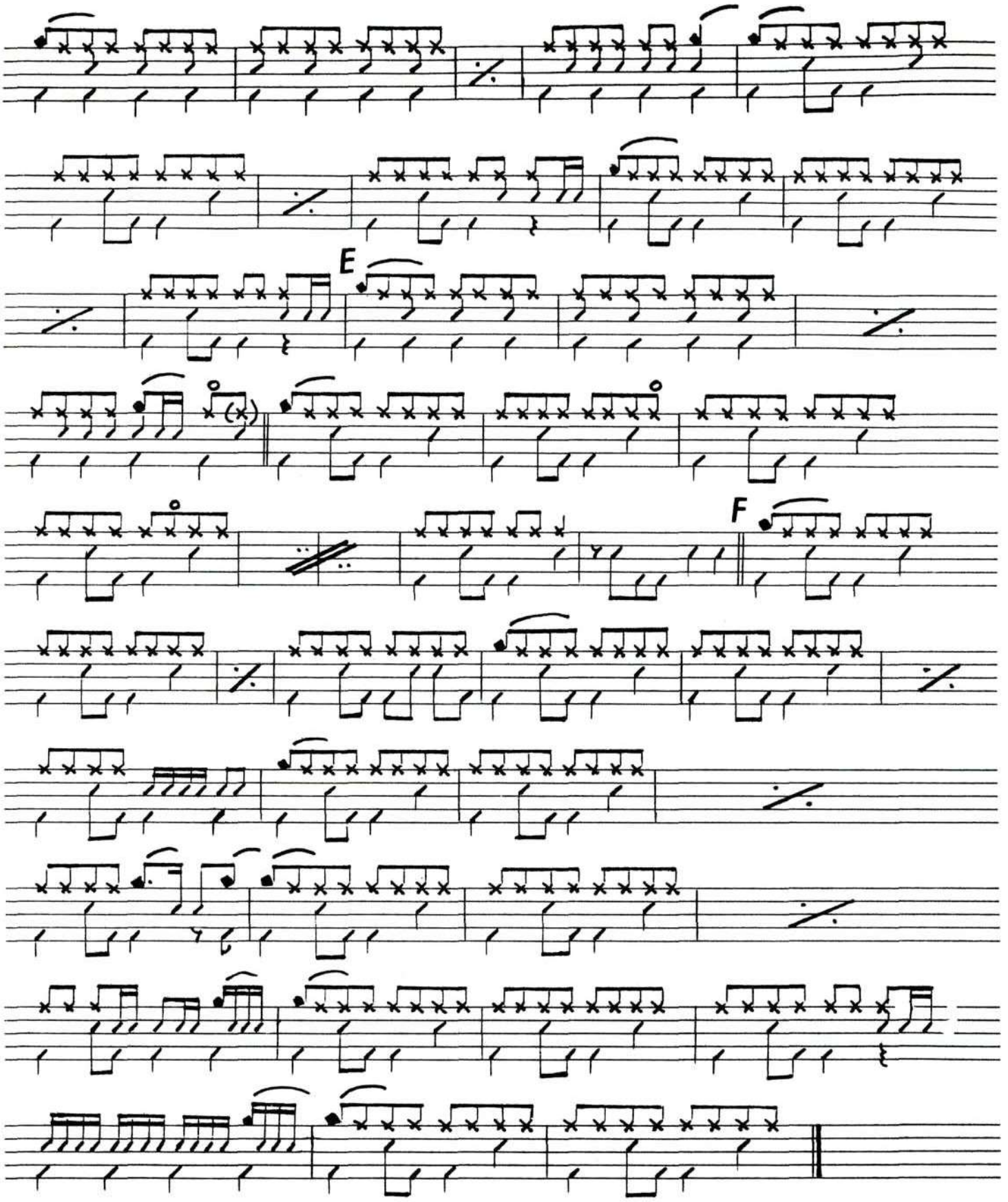
Transcribed by James Morton

"The Long Run"

This month's Rock Chart features "The Long Run" by the Eagles. Drummer/co-writer Don Henley lays the heat down with a straight, unhurried feel, and his playing reflects both economy and creativity. All the fills are played on the snare, yet there is no sense of a loss of tonal color. Note the pickup figure at the beginning and before each verse tone measure before letters D & F). Another drummer might be tempted to fill in the empty downbeat, but in this case, the silence is most effective.

E
F

Vitale *continued from page 29*

that, being more absorbant. Now *Pampers* won't work, folks," he joked, "But you take a baby diaper which is about 18" x 18" and cut it in half and then fold those halves so you get a piece maybe 2" x 5". If you don't have a child or can't get hold of any diapers, those guitar cloth rags are really good.

"I use Remo clear *Ambassadors* on the top and *Diplomats* on the bottom, which is a formula Russ Kunkel uses. I love the way his drums sound, so I asked him why his drums sound like that and mine don't. It's a warm, round sound on the toms; warm, but loud. It's not dead—it's a rich tom sound, which to me. is a very pure tom-tom sound."

He uses six cymbals: a 17" Paiste crash, a 19" Zildjian crash, a 16" Paiste crash, a 16" Zildjian crash, a 22" Paiste ride, and an 18" Zildjian Pang. He also has a 30" Piaste gong, and 14" Zildjian hi-hats.

"One thing I do that I've been really enjoying is in between my 13" tom and my first floor tom. there is a space there, and in that space. I have another set of hi-hat cymbals. They don't open and close; I just set the tension so it's either a tight or a washy sound. It depends on how tight you set the tension. What's really nice is that when you're playing a real nice simple pattern and you want to use a floor tom with the snare on the backbeat, you don't have to keep taking your hand from your hi-hat all the way over to your floor tom. Your right hand gets to stay on the right side of your body, which is where your deep toms are anyway. Kunkel is using it now too. We swap ideas all the time. It's funny—it's different with drummers. Guitar players sometimes find these sounds and they don't want anybody to know. Drummers know how to share. When you watch a drummer play, you're looking at it. There's nothing in between, like with the guitar cord and all the gizmos plugged in. You're looking at it."

He uses the same set-up in the studio and also has an identical set at home for practice purposes. "It's set up in the exact way as it is on the road and I think that's real important. Sometimes drummers can't afford to get two sets of drums, but you can find beat-up drums that are cheap, just so they're set the same. It doesn't matter if the cymbal at home has a crack in it or the heads are worn to nothing. For me, when I sit down to those drums, it's the same set-up as on the road, with the same amount of drums placed in the same place. When you work things out, your set-up, the tension, and everything should be the same.

"Practice for me is not defined as just playing. Playing your instrument isn't necessarily practice. You have to develop. Playing is jamming and jamming is cool, but to me, practicing is taking something and pursuing it and having a goal. It's trying something new—a new rhythm pattern or a new piano exercise—because that's training your mind. We can all play, we can all jam. but you've got to work things out at home and then take them on stage. It's training your mind to be coordinated: to have independence."

To Vitale, a good drummer is judged by "how he reads a song. What I mean by that is, how his part is an intricate element to the song. I don't look at how fast he can play or how fancy or complicated he plays, unless the song calls for it. You just can't play to show off and be fancy while playing with James Taylor. Secondly is how his drums sound, how his time is. if the right fills are put in, which goes back to the song. If I want to look at technical drummers, if I want to get off. I'll look at Billy Cobham and people like that. I love that too. but Porcaro is an excellent example of someone who really reads a song. To me, he's being fancy and complicated just because he's playing simple. A lot of drummers, including myself, hate it when we get a great pattern in the studio, and the writer says, 'Ya know . . ..' and you know what's coming. He's going to say. 'Why don't you put half your drums back in the cases'—and he's right! I'm a

songwriter and I understand it, although I don't like it sometimes. On my songs, the hardest thing to do is be objective as to how I should play on my songs. A lot of people would say that because I was doing a solo album, people would want to hear some drumming. I said, 'Well, I'm going to be drumming on my record, but I'm going to be playing drums to these songs I wrote as if somebody else wrote them.' It was hard not to get too carried away."

Vitale's solo project. *Plantation Harbor,* came about as a result of having written for the past ten years, some of the material having been covered by other artists. It also resulted from his association with producer Bill Szymczyk on numerous albums, the Eagles and Joe Walsh, included.

"Bill has heard my songs for years because of other people I've worked with. Also. I kind of write in the studio, as far as coming up with ideas and suggestions on the spot. He saw that there was ability there to write songs, so he called me up one time and said, 'Hey, you got any tunes?' I played him a few things and he asked if I wanted to make a record, and I did. I wouldn't want to make it with anyone else. I must have made thirty or forty albums with that guy, so it was obvious that he was the guy, aside from being my friend. I mean, we watch football together real good." he laughed. "We're very compatible, musically and personally. It took two and a half years because we had other things going on too. I was scared to death that it was taking so long because of the rapid changes in music, but I think the material survives the times."

All drums, percussion, keyboards, synthesizers and lead vocals are supplied by Vitale, as well as. all the writing, with the exception of one tune on which he collaborated with Bill Szymczyk and Stephen Stills. On one track. "Theme from Cabin Weirdos," however, he gives vocal credit to "Harry the Cardinal" and the drum echo credit to Mount Mitchell, from what proved to be an interesting recording experience for Vitale.

"I really like the tune because it's one of those mood pieces, always intended to be an instrumental. Szymczyk really liked it and we decided we wanted to do it a little different. We went up to his cabin to do some overdubs and had a little remote studio with twenty-four tracks. I used a *Rhythm Ace* to start with because I intended to overdub the drums on it. I started with a Fender Rhodes part and did everything on that track, except we overdubbed twenty-six strings later on. So it was time for the drums and they were in his cabin. He has this great big porch that overlooks the mountains into a big valley and it has that gunshot ricochet echo. It was Szymczyk's idea to bring the drums out on the back porch. He miked them normally, tight miking, and then said, 'Give me about a half hour.' Whatever he says, you go with because you know it's going to be good. So he took two mic's, and from where I was sitting on my kit, it goes out for about ten or twenty miles and then you hit Mt. Mitchell, which is the highest peak east of the Mississippi in North Carolina. There are these two big mountains on either side, so there's this valley, which progressively went lower. He took two microphones, stretched two cables, 100 yards out and 100 yards apart, a left and a right, and put those on two separate tracks. He was catching the natural echo of the drum; that rich sound. It didn't have to be processed. I want to make all my records in that canyon now.

"Then this little bird flew in while we were cutting this track. He was so far away from the drums, themselves, that they didn't scare him away. I'm not one to get real deep, but that bird pops up in perfect holes in that song. He'd do one of his 'tweets' in tune and right in a nice hole. I didn't know it while it was happening, though, because I couldn't hear it, but Szymczyk heard it in the truck. Right before we were about to do this overdub, he said to me in the phones. 'We've got to go now. Let's go all the way through it and don't make any mistakes.' Pressure now, and he's not like that, but I figured something was up his sleeve. So I was real cautious and did it, not that it was that spectacular of a feat. The song wasn't that difficult and I knew it really well. But because I only heard my drums from the close mic's, I never heard that bird. And then the bird split before I could give him a W-4 form. Some of the local people confirmed that he was a Cardinal, so we named him Harry. I want to go down there and record all my drums there and overdub the rest." he said, explaining that his future plans include writing music and making records. "I would like to make records at Elektra/Asylum forever, because I like this company. They are totally supportive of me. I'm new as a solo artist, and with that in mind, they are treating me like somebody who has been here for five albums' worth. I have absolutely no complaints."

Since completing his own album, he has spent the last several months working on the road with Dan Fogelberg, and is looking forward to working on record projects with Eric Carmen and Kenny Loggins. This summer he will be reunited with Crosby, Stills & Nash, on tour, and will be working with Joe Walsh in a duo album, featuring their joint and individual compositional talents, "When there's time," he laughs, realizing the absurdity of that statement.

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by Douglass A. Smith

Removing Plastic Coverings

Removing the plastic covering from your wood drums *can* dramatically improve their sound. I've done this with most of my drums and I've been pleased with both the sound and appearance of the instruments.

Removing the plastic allows the shell of the drum to vibrate more freely, and reduces the overall shell diameter, thus giving the heads more room to float on the sound edge of the drum. No one ever covered a violin with red sparkle plastic, and virtually no wooden acoustic instrument is covered, other than drums.

Plastic is put on drums in the first place because it's easier than applying a hand finish. The covering also protects the drum from scratches, dents and the elements. But unless you're the type who leaves your kit out in the rain, or gets an arcane pleasure out of tossing your set down staircases, the plastic is not only useless, but a hindrance to the sound of your drums as well.

Once you've decided to refinish your drums, it's good to have a thorough knowledge of how your drums are put together. I'd suggest starting with an extra drum you may have around, or the smallest and least visible of the set—the snare drum. If your snare is metal, the next best drum would be a floor tom. Don't take your entire kit apart and then decide you're in too deep. Do only one drum at a time.

The first step, obviously, is to completely dismantle the drum. Removing the grommet from the air vent is the most difficult part of this task and the pesky thing will probably have to be destroyed and replaced. With a little bit of caution, the name plate can be saved, though I don't generally bother keeping them. Be sure to replace all bolts, nuts and washers to their respective places to avoid loss.

After the shell is stripped of all hardware, you can remove the plastic covering. If the drum is old, the plastic will usually peel off with very little prompting. If the plastic is reluctant, a little lacquer thinner applied to the seam should loosen it enough to be pulled off. The lacquer thinner can be re-applied as needed if the covering is still stubborn.

Chances are good that you will now be confronted with a bare shell covered with old, dried-out glue. At this point, you should consider any hardware changes to be made. New holes can be drilled or old ones filled with standard wood putty. Any small imperfections in the shell can also be filled with wood putty.

A power sander can be of great assistance for removing the old glue from the shell. *But be careful.* Like any tool, as its usefulness increases, so does its potential for abuse. Power sanders are designed for flat surfaces and if you're not careful, you'll have just that; a bunch of flat surfaces on your once round shell. If you don't have access to a power sander, get ready for more hand sanding than you've ever done before. Use finer grades of sandpaper with each sanding. Keep in mind that the smoothness of the final finish will only be as smooth as the sanded shell. When the shell is as smooth as it's going to get, the hardest part of the job is over. Once the glue is off the drum, you will notice the beauty of a wood shell. At this point, there exists a golden opportunity to "true" your drum to make certain the sound edge is flat (See T*he Care and Feeding of Drums,* MD:Oct/Nov 1980).

There are many ways to finish the drum and you can get as elaborate as you like. I like to lightly stain the shell with a conventional wood stain, put on a couple of thin coats of varnish, and *lightly* spray the shell with plastic sealant. I know what you're thinking: the whole idea of this procedure is to get rid of the plastic. But remember, this is a *very light* coat, not a thick sheet, and it does offer the drum a modest amount of protection.

Finally, clean all your hardware and re-assemble the drum. Then stand back and admire your work. Because the drum does not have any protective covering, I can't stress enough the importance of cases. Foam-lined fiber cases are not that expensive and they will save you money and anguish in the long run.

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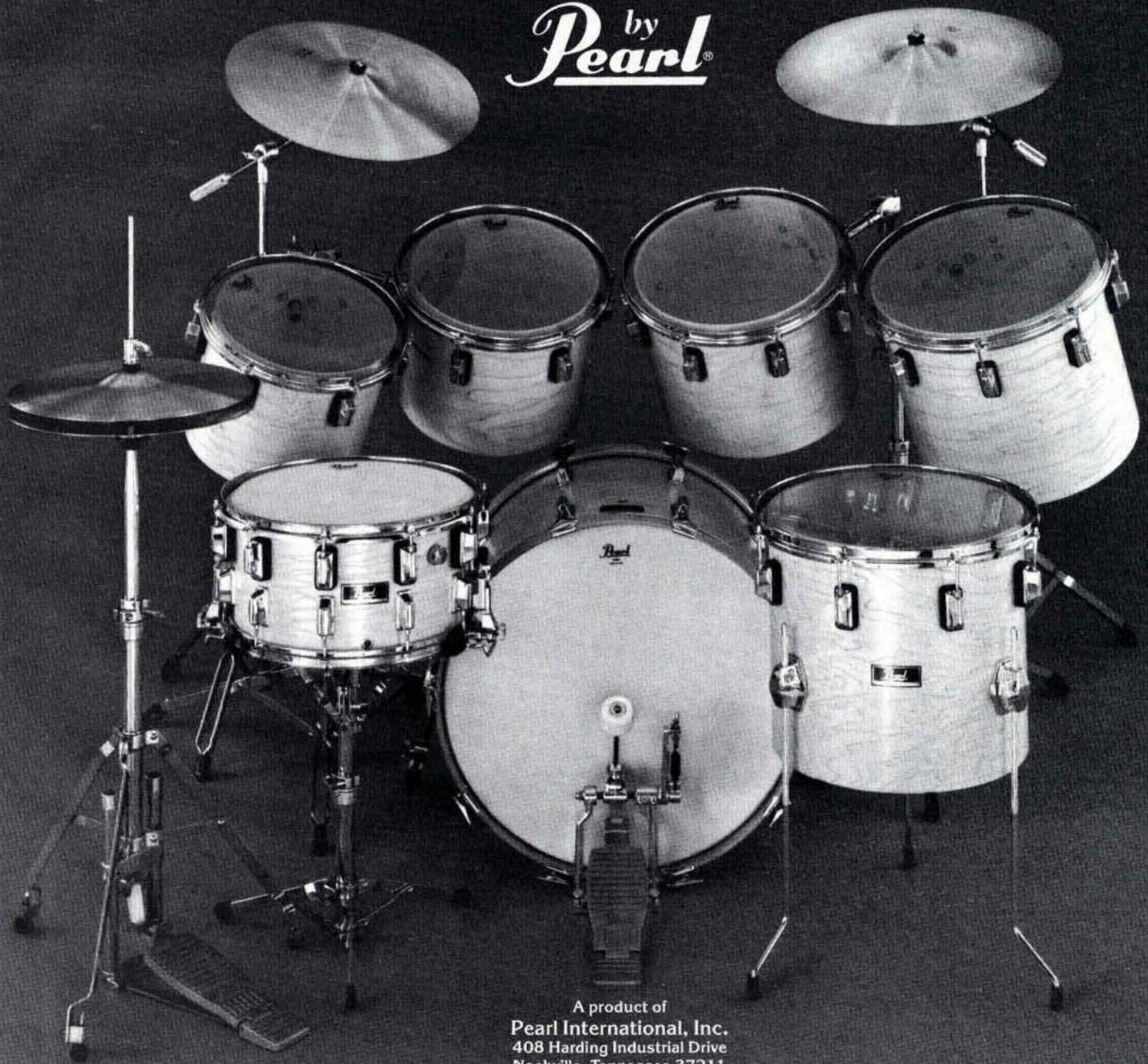

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Noto *continued from page 30*

then I went back and got some more. There were a lot of shakey times. I would have felt a lot better starting with fifty thousand, but I'm glad I didn't. It was a lot of work. Of course, you've got to be able not to have to live off of it. If I would have been living off it, I would have had to start with fifty thousand so I could be taking a salary out of it. The way I did it, it was still rough up until about seven or eight months ago. I was still day to day, wondering if I was going to make it; wondering if I was going to fold or not. They say three years is what it takes and I *believe* it! It's not like. 'I sold this, so I can put the money in my pocket.' Because when you sell something, you've got to buy something else to replace it. And I kept going and going and filling up the store." Noto pointed out that it takes time, patience and sacrifice to get yourself firmly established. "You know, working six days a week at the store and not taking anything out is hard to do for two and a half years. I'd have to take money out of my savings and out of my paycheck (from playing) to do this. I had a van and all kinds of stuff that I sold to get in this business."

Noto found that money was especially tight when he was just getting on his feet, and things like rent, electricity, and phone bills added up very quickly. He also encountered some unexpected expenses. "The insurance was something I didn't think would be that high. The burglar alarm system and the little things that you don't think about, add up every month."

"Do you think it would be harder to start now with the high inflation?" I inquired. "You better believe it, because there ain't nobody in their right mind who would open up a business and pay 20% interest. That's stupid. I don't know how you could make it," he commented. "You'd have to do so much. When I opened up, I figured just to stay in business, I would have to make $35 a day. That doesn't sound like much, but when you only have a few things in the store to choose from . . ." Noto estimates that his breakeven point is now up to around $80 a day and emphasized that that's just to stay open—not to purchase any new equipment. He attributes the increased operating expenses to inflation, more advertising and the fact that his rent has just about doubled in the last three years.

Noto has found that a vital aspect of the business is the small items such as guitar strings, drum heads and sticks and he referred to them as his "bread and butter." "People think the big sales help you," he observed. "It's not really the big sales. The big sales are the extra money. What keeps you open is the small stuff. But you've *got* to have the big stuff in for the little stuff to sell."

What began as an adverse situation for Noto, in that he was initially unable to get the drum lines he wanted, turned out to be a blessing in disguise. It forced him to diversify early and to survive in an environment that, perhaps, could not have supported an exclusive drum shop. Note's shop is the only music store in Baton Rouge that is owned by a drummer and that has a primary focus on the local drummer. Nonetheless, he doubts that he could have made it on drum sales alone. "As much drum business as I do, there's many days that go by I don't sell any drums, but I'll sell a guitar or I'll sell an amplifier or I'll sell a PA system."

Noto has found that a personalized approach to advertising works well. "The best results that I get are from mailing out stuff. You mail out stuff to drummers and keep in touch with them and send them a little discount card or something. That works great because it makes them know that you're aiming at them. If you spend enough time to go for that, then they'll come in. Other than that, I haven't tried TV, but radio does pretty good." He decided against the newspaper as "it's very expensive and it's in the garbage the same day" but has found that *Cablecast,* a weekly TV guide publication, does pretty well. Of course, a basic method is the yellow pages and even though they are expensive, Noto feels that the price is worth it. "For about an eighth of a page, it's like $170 per month. I feel like radio and the yellow pages work together. You get your name out on the radio and then they look in the yellow pages and remember hearing about you."

Noto values the reputation he has established and believes firmly in standing behind what he sells. "When I sell something. I'm going to service it and keep it in warranty and make sure if something happens, you're going to get your full warranty out of it or I'll make 'em give you a new piece," he asserted. "I'm going to make sure and make you happy, or else you'll put my name around that I didn't treat you right and then it would be bad for business."

I asked Noto what advice he would give to a newcomer in the business. He explained that there are a lot of companies that require that you buy a number of different items when making an order. This applied mainly to companies who may be only a branch of a large corporation which may own several music companies. In order to get what you really want to carry, you may have to buy products from the related companies and therefore have merchandise that you don't really want, and may have trouble selling. Noto said that there are more of those companies than you might think and it would be wise to avoid that type of arrangement if possible. He further advised to keep up with new products and to buy some of them, however, he cautioned against stocking up on a *lot* of the new things because developments and tastes change so quickly. For example, he mentioned that there are "ten million" different kinds of sticks, so it's virtually impossible to stock them all.

Noto was much impressed by and grateful for the assistance he received from the other local music stores when he opened. Instead of facing a hostile, cut-throat, competitive mob, he discovered that his competition could be very helpful. He found that others were referring business to him for products they didn't handle and, in turn, he readily referred customers to them when he was unable to meet their needs. He made a special point of saying, "All the stores in this town helped me out." Which goes to show, I guess, that help sometimes comes from unexpected sources and that cooperation as a business approach can be beneficial to all concerned.

Greenspon *continued from page 31*

Greenspon's advertising strategy has consisted of local advertisements, the yellow pages and ads in *Modern Drummer.* He feels that this triple combination has worked well for him. In addition, he added, "Of prime importance is word-of-mouth. I have found that as people come in and recommend us to other people, confidence tends to build our reputation and repeat customers."

I wondered how he had managed to cope with the competition and again found "attitude" to be a key element in his approach. "I have to admit," he replied, "the competition in New York is extremely intense. But yet, I still see that there is room for a place like Drummers World, mainly because of the attitude that we have. I think if you look at competition as something that's incentive to better yourself, then you're going along on the right track. It's like playing. If you look at all the drummers who are better than you and say, 'I'll never make it because these guys outplay me,' then you're never going to do it; you've already lost the fight. But if you look at it as, 'Boy, these guys are great. Look at what I can learn and put in my own playing,' then, you're going about it with a positive attitude. That's what it's about."

Greenspon emphasized the importance of the first year in the life of a business and feels that it is necessary to show growth during that period. It also helps if you have some persistence to tide you through the inevitable rough times. "The first few months we were open, I was beginning to wonder if anybody knew we were here!" he laughed. "You know, when you see a few lonely souls walking in each day and you say, 'Is that all you want is a pair of drumsticks?' you start to wonder, 'Am I doing the right thing?' But after about six months or so, you start to realize, 'Hey, it's just a matter of time to where more and more people will begin hearing about us and feel good about us and come back.' That's when you start feeling 'I've done the right thing.' "

In the process of preparing this article I learned that getting the right to carry a particular line of merchandise is not always the simple matter I had assumed it to be. I asked Greenspon if this had posed a problem for him as he had opened in an area already populated by other music stores. "Yes that's very difficult," he remembered. "There are certain companies who, for whatever reasons, don't want to sell to new dealers. Many times, certain manufacturers have a difficult time meeting the supply and demand of the established dealer. So they turn off to a new dealer. Here again. I think time wins out. If the new dealer proves himself, then the companies realize, 'Hey, this guy is as good for us as we are for him.' " "Did you have to go through that phase of proving yourself?" I asked. "Yes. Certain companies just don't want to come around. Others are more than happy to accomodate you." He revealed that he met most of the dealer representatives at a NAMM convention and that's where he made some of his first orders. He thinks that this is probably a good way to go about it (perhaps due to the less formal and congenial atmosphere there) but cautioned that this still does not insure that they will sell to you.

Greenspon offered some food for thought for anyone contemplating opening a drum shop: "You've got to realize it is a long term investment. Make sure you know the area you are working in, location wise. I also think it's very important for anybody going into this business to really like people and be able to get along with them. You should really *like* what you're selling and *know* what you're selling. If you don't have those kind of ingredients, you better forget it because people know if you're honest or not. If you like and know what you're selling, that honesty comes through."

Greenspon has tried to develop a sensitivity to the rapidly growing percussion field, and has found that there is no guarantee of success. "You know, the last few years, the economy has really been very poor, so, you never know the right time or the wrong time to open a business. It's something you have to feel within yourself. If you believe in what you're doing, then it's right. If you're hesitant, then I wouldn't advise you to do it. Otherwise, you're never going to make it in anything!" It was obvious to me that Barry Greenspon genuinely does believe in what he's doing and I suspect that with his infectious positive attitude, he will continue to be successful.

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TEAR OFF OR MAKE A PHOTOCOPY

Roy *continued from page 32*

gave it." The snare passed the test and Roy has been carrying that particular line with confidence for the last three years.

The shop's location is now in a central part of Louisville, near several major thoroughfares, whereas his first two stores were on side streets in rather out-of-the-way spots. I asked Roy how important location is. "For the pro drummers, it doesn't make too much difference. But teaching is very important to us, and if kids and their parents can see the store, they might get interested and come in." I asked if his competition came mainly from general music stores. "I don't like to think of them as competition. We each do our own thing. I know most of the other store owners personally and we get along very well. I don't like to get into that thing where everybody is cut-throat with everybody else. I try to sell my merchandise at a discounted price that I can live with, but I don't necessarily try to undercut someone else."

In addition to his basic advertising in the phone book, Roy has found some specialized advertising techniques to be effective. One of these is clinics. Jim Rupp, whose credits include work with Glenn Miller, Hubert Laws, and Don Ellis, recently conducted a clinic at the shop. "We had about 150 at the clinic, and it worked out very well. I plan on having some more in the future. It's good advertising and it's a great learning experience for everybody. With newspaper, TV or radio advertising, the price is very high and a lot of the people you are getting to aren't drummers and don't care about a drum shop. So I think the clinics, the teaching and the ensembles do us more good down the road than just general advertising." Another successful approach for Roy has been renting a booth at the Kentucky State Fair, which is held in Louisville. He estimates that some 300.000 people attend the annual ten-day event. Roy doesn't do any actual selling at the booth, but hands out fliers that contain a map and general information about the shop. "We've had a lot of people come by and talk to us. so that's good advertising. I feel it's paid off well."

I sensed Johnny Roy's strong commitment to his drum shop, his students, his customers and his playing, which he still does occasionally. With his positive attitude and dedication, I suspect that Johnny Roy's will be around for quite a few years to come.

Mahoney *continued from page 33*

Louisville area but concluded that it was not feasible. His reasoning was that the percussion portion of the business done

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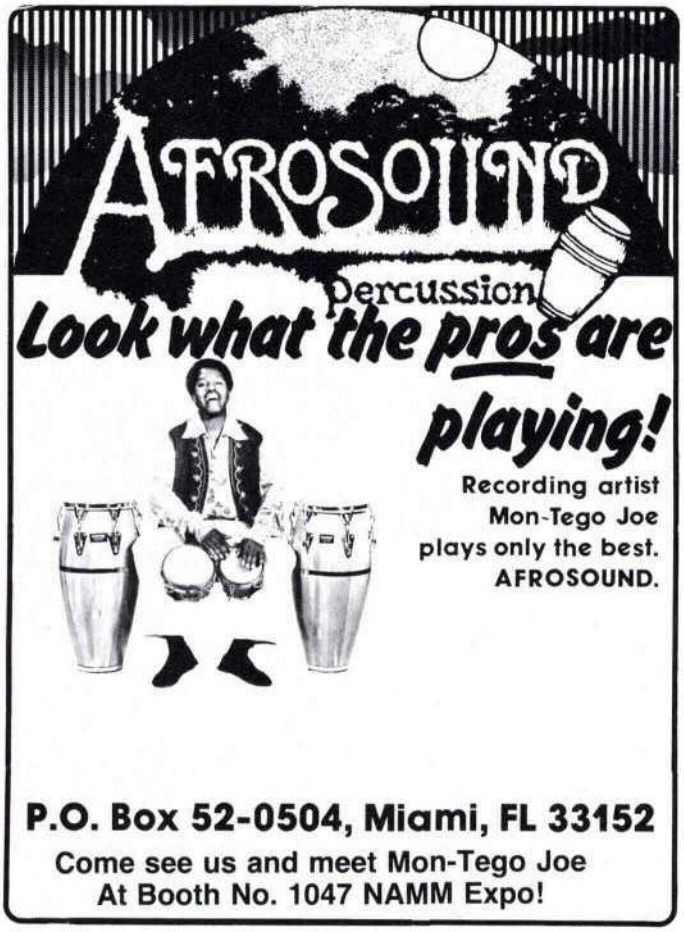

by the schools is not all that big and it would not be worthwhile unless one were in a position to make a bid on all instruments. Mahoney *is* in such a position and maybe that's why he can afford to go that direction. I didn't ask him directly about this but he did say that there was a time that he didn't fool with it very much. At any rate, it may be difficult for the average shop owner to compete with a full music store when it comes to bidding on the musical needs of the local educational institutions.

Mo Mahoney's advice to new drum shop owners is to "make every sale important, even if it's a small sale, a wing nut or something. Make that as important as a drum set sale. The other thing to be careful of is charge accounts, because sometimes it is very difficult to get your money back. Try to be honest, because if you do one dishonest thing and get caught at it, you're going to not only lose that customer, but you're going to lose all the referrals and everything else. A bad customer talks more about you than a good customer. They go out of their way to tell you that they were screwed someplace, so it's a bad thing. I'd rather lose money on the thing than take a chance of somebody thinking that I screwed them." Pretty good advice, I think.

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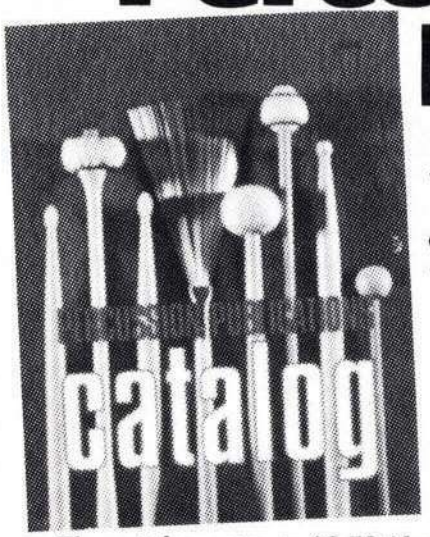

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D.M.
Denton, Texas

A. The Ludwig Drum Company manufactured that particular snare strainer unit up until 1969, and parts were available from Ludwig up until 1979. Presently, there is a conversion kit available through Ludwig at $129.00 retail. The kit includes a bottom hoop, the strainer and butt sides of the unit, and the snare itself. Another option is to contact some of the larger drum shops in Chicago and New York City. There's a good possibility that a few of these shops might still have the original parts in stock.

Q. Can you provide me with information on how to purchase a Steel Drum?

K.C.
San Francisco, California

A. David Samuels gave us the name of a gentleman who makes Steel Drums of professional quality, and has been doing so for thirty-five years. Write to: Vincente Hernandez, 325 E. 53 St.. Brooklyn, New York 11203.

Q. What is the name of the album that Philly Joe Jones and Elvin Jones did together?

L.G.
Lomita, California

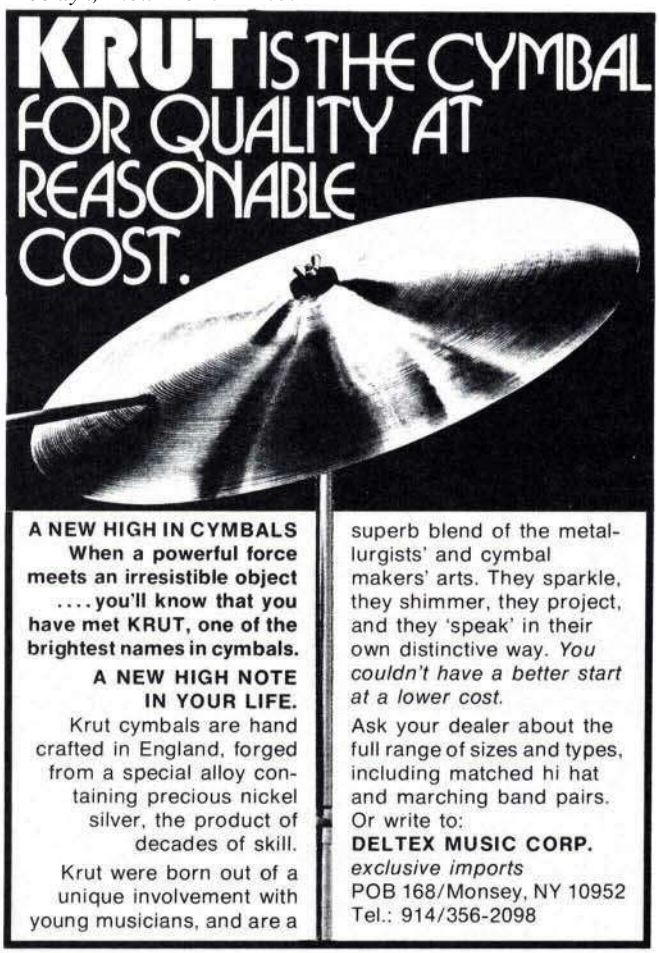
A. The album was called, Philly Joe Jones & Elvin Jones Together, *Atlantic SD 1428. The record is out of print, but you might be able to find one in a second-hand shop.*

Q. I've heard a lot about the Evans *Hydraulic* and Mirror drumheads. Some drummers say they're "dead" sounding. I'm interested in trying them, but I heard they don't sound good on small concert toms—only on larger toms. All my drums are concert toms. What can you tell me about these drumheads?

J.P.
West Hartford, Connecticut

A. Sue Vogel at Evans says "The Hydraulic *heads are "dead" sounding. We don't say they'll work on, like, Remo* Roto-toms, *but they will work on the tom-toms. The* Chrome *heads will not give a "dead" sound. It's not a hydraulic head. The* Hydraulic *heads are used all the way through on all tom-toms all the way down to 6". The oil-filled* Hydraulic *heads were designed to give that "dead" studio sound, but the* Chrome *heads weren't. They give a brighter, more projected sound than the Hydraulics."*

continued on page 114



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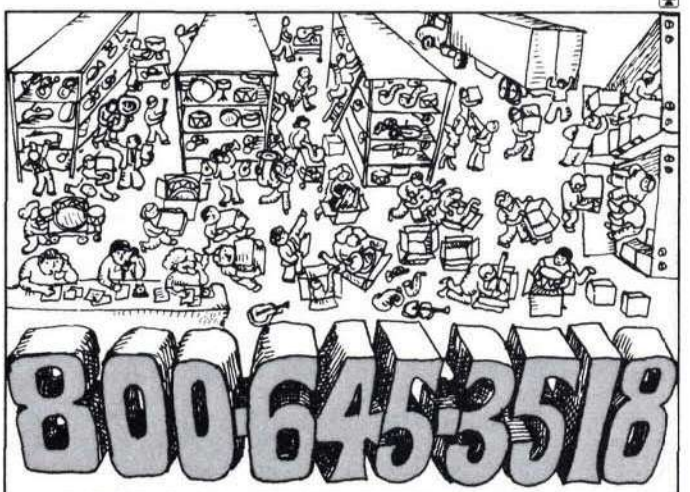
D.R.
Columbus, Ohio

A. Your question answers itself. You want to "seriously" pursue an artform that "so few people appreciate." What kind of career *do you hope to pursue? The best advice is to learn to play every style of music that you can. Having a knowledge of music theory, drum rudiments, and different musical styles will enhance your drumming, and greatly increase your options to work when you're not making money in a fusion band. You say that "people" tell you you're a good drummer. If these "people" are competent musicians—fine! But, if they are friends, the local storekeeper, and your girlfriend, then what are you weighing your talents against?*

Q. What ever became of Carl Palmer's latest band, P.M.?

S.C.
Braintree, Massachusetts

A. Carl disbanded that group. Warner Brothers sent us word of a new band called Asia. The lineup: Carl Palmer: drums, Steve Howe: guitars, Geoff Downes: keyboards, and John Wetton: bass & vocals. These musicians have been members of Emerson, Lake & Palmer, Yes, U.K., King Crimson, Uriah Heep, Roxy Music and Atomic Rooster, among others.



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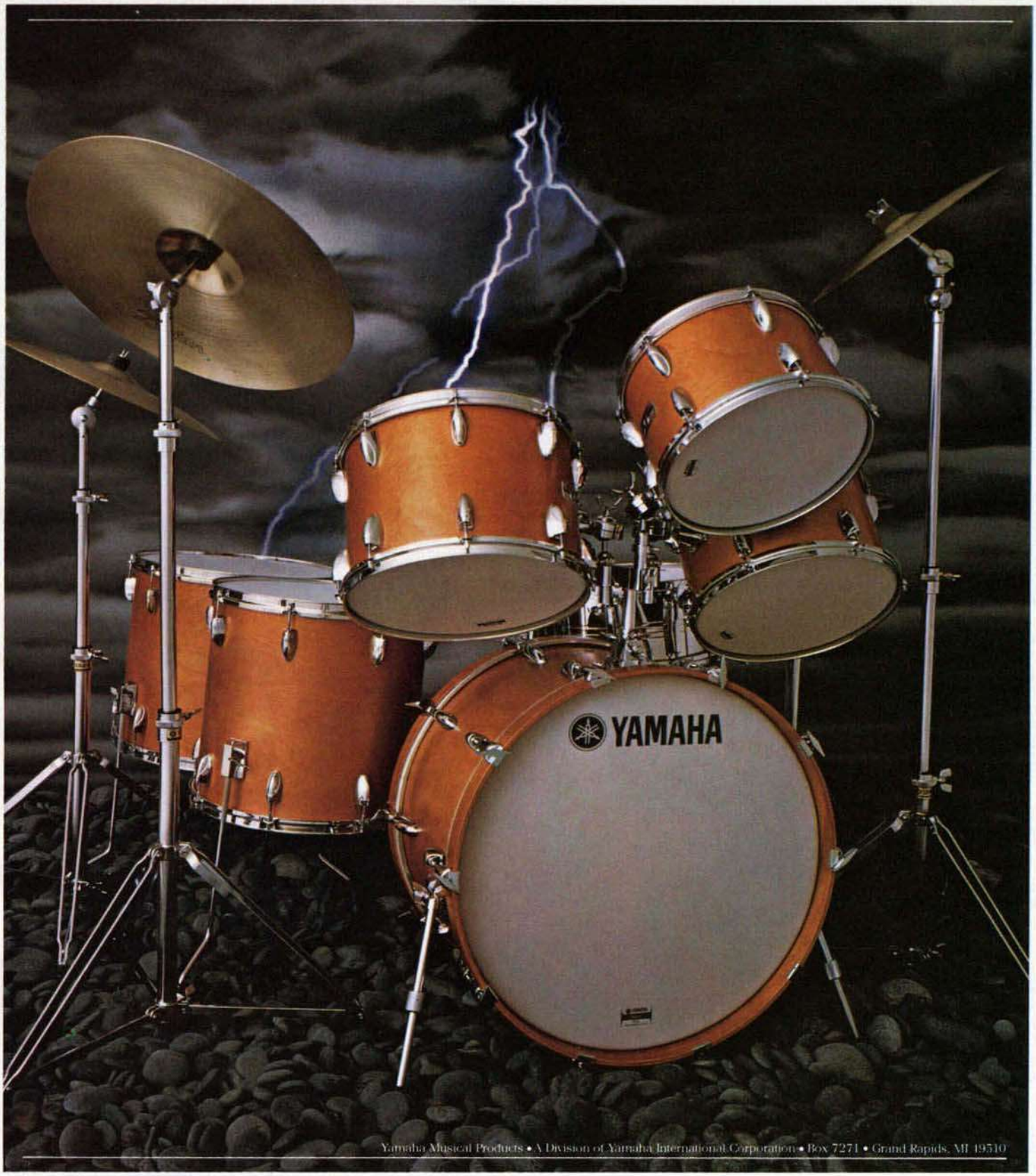

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You can learn to read and play Rock's most frequently used drum rhythms using the BASICS OF ROCK DRUMMING Cassette and Book. Special Feature—The Cassette contains 72-rhythm section play along tracks, minus drummer, designed for you to read and play the rhythms contained in the book. Send $11.50 plus $1.50 postage (Outside U.S.A. postage-$3.50) to: Chet Doboe, 427 Uniondale Avenue, Uniondale, NY 11553.

continued on page 118

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PROGRESSIVE STEPS TO PROGRESSIVE FUNK by Roberto Petaccia, 138 pages designed to increase flexibility, articulation, phrasing capability and ambidexterity within soloing situations in the FUNK, LATIN and SWING idioms. Send MONEY ORDER for $15.00 + $2.00 postage to: R. P. PUBLICATIONS, 74 The Fenway B-3, Boston, MA 02115

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ATTENTION: PROFESSIONAL DRUMMERS. 11 PC SLINGERLAND COPPER-PLATED WOODSHELLED CONCERT DRUMSET FOR SALE. 5 ZILDJIAN CYMBALS W/STANDS AND CASES. BEAUTIFUL SOUND, QUALITY, AND APPEARANCE. MUST SELL $3000 OR BEST OFFER. SHOWED AT MIKE'S DRUM SHOP, SB CALIF. 805-962-1211.

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Tama 6½ × 14 Mastercraft Rosewood Snare Drum with fiber case. Hardly Used. $250.00 Tom Palmiero, 2619 Dunham Rd., Utica, N.Y. 13501 (315) 735-8839

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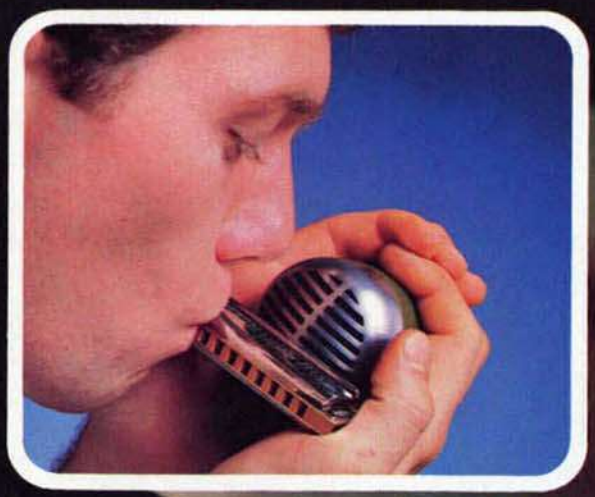

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- Or, you can join the hundreds of drummers and keyboard players who have discovered the pleasure of using the SM10A/12A/14A head-worn microphones (with or without monitor earphone). These lightweight, noise-canceling microphones offer a full range, smooth frequency response especially tailored for vocals so you can sing *and* play without bothersome booms getting in your way.
- Also, there's great news for harmonica players; the legendary 520D "Green Bullet" is back for a limited engagement! It delivers all the down home sound that's made it so popular with top bluesmen for so many years while fitting right in the palm of your hand.

Shure offers a wide selection of microphones to meet your sound reinforcement requirements. Visit your local dealer or write us regarding your specific sound requirements.

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INDUSTRY HAPPENINGS

ROBERT ZILDJIAN RESIGNS

The Avedis Zildjian Company has announced that the interests of Robert Zildjian and his family in the company have been purchased by the company. Robert Zildjian has resigned as an officer and director of the company.

Armand Zildjian, president and chief operating officer of the company, will continue in that capacity. The balance of the Zildjian management team remains unchanged. Armand also noted that 1981 sales were the best in the company's history.

MAX ROACH RECEIVES DOCTORATE

On May 16, 1982, Max Roach received an Honorary Doctorate degree at the commencement ceremony of The New England Conservatory of Music in Boston, Massachusetts.

The MD staff would like to congratulate Dr. Roach for this esteemed degree, and also The New England Conservatory for their excellent judgement in presenting the award.

BELLSON JOINS PEARL

Louis Bellson has rejoined the ranks of Pearl Drum endorsees. His new Pearl *Extender* outfit was selected on a recent visit to Pearl International Inc., Nashville, Tennessee. Welcoming Louie back is (L to R) Les Parks, Sales Manager; Tim McCormick, Artist Relations/Advertising Manager; Walt Johnston, President; and Al Duffy, Production Manager and designer of the Pearl *Extender.*

LUDWIG ANNOUNCES ELEVENTH INTERNATIONAL PERCUSSION SYMPOSIUM

The University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee will host the Eleventh International Percussion Symposium, slated for August 8-14, 1982. A leading faculty of percussion authorities from all parts of the United States will gather on this centrally located campus for what is being planned as the "1982 Percussion Event Of The Year."

Multiple specialist tracks of instruction will be offered in rock, jazz, and commercial *Outfit Drumming,* marimba and vibe *Mallet Percussion,* corps style *Marching Percussion, Total Percussion,* and a *General Percussion* track for music educators and non-percussionists.

A variety of instruction levels will be available in all specialist tracks. Transferable credits are pending approval within the state.

For complete details, application forms, and university food service/dormitory information, write to: Karl Dustman, Marketing Manager, Ludwig Industries, 1728 North Damen Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60647.

RICHARDSON TO HEAD SLINGERLAND-DEAGAN

R. J. "Dick" Richardson has been appointed president of Slingerland Drum Company and the J. C. Deagan Company, both of Niles, Illinois, The announcement was made by Daniel J. Henkin, president and chairman of the board of C. G. Conn, Ltd., Elkhart, Indiana, owner of the two Illinois subsidiaries.

"Dick Richardson brings vast experience and great prestige to the Slingerland-Deagan team," Henkin said, "He exemplifies the leadership that is helping C. G. Conn, its divisions and subsidiaries, to grow despite a very competitive market."

Richardson is very active in the music industry, and was recently named president of the Music Industry Council, an auxiliary of the Music Educators National Conference. He was also on the original board of the Percussive Arts Society, and is a former board member of NABIM. He is a current board member of the Association of Concert Bands of America,

Richardson is also known for his willingness to work with and listen to his dealers, "We will strive to make a product the dealers want and can sell—and we will deliver it on time. We are getting back to basics, and we are going to talk and meet with dealers on a one-to-one basis. We will not be plagued with the ivory tower syndrome," he pledged.

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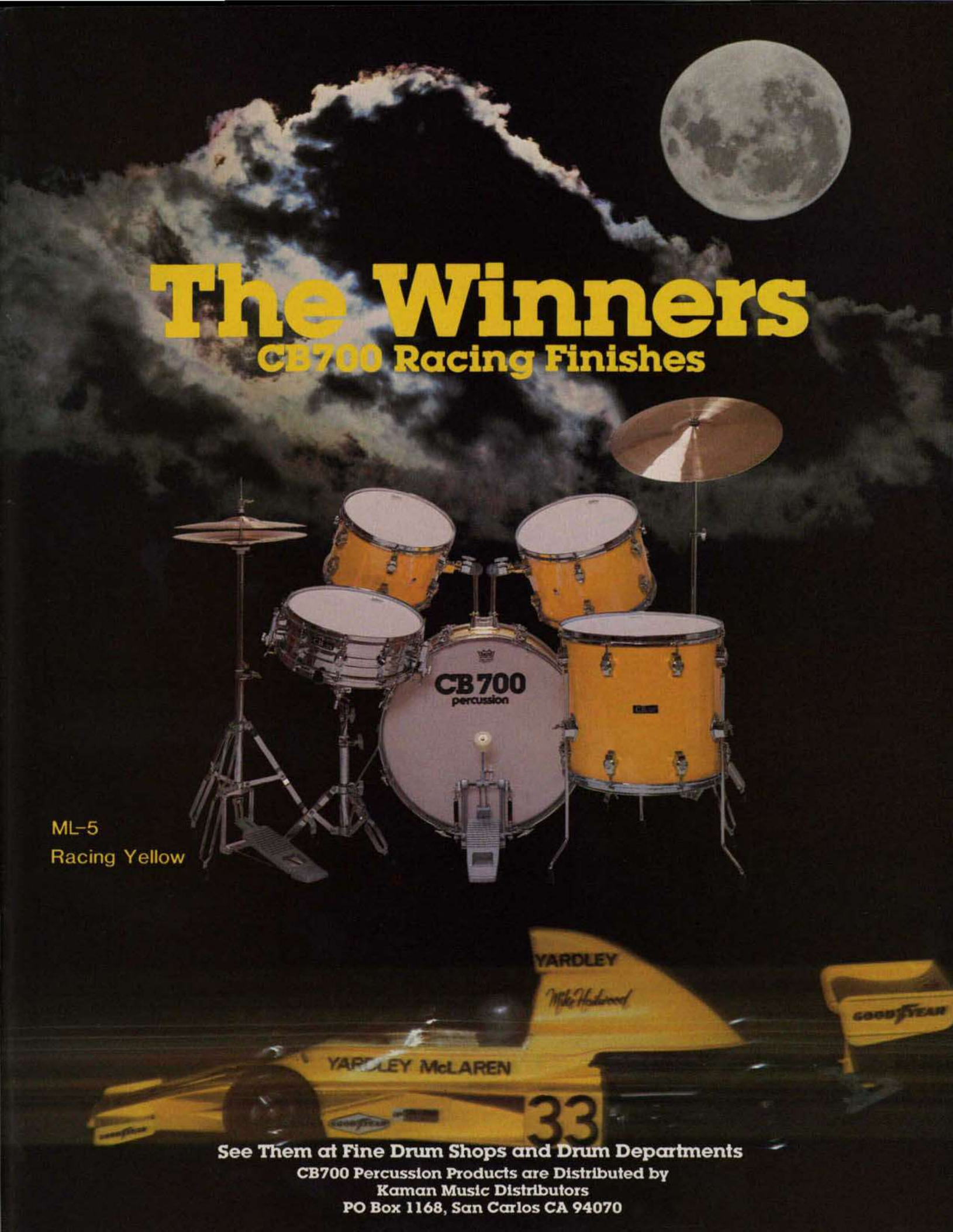
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JUST DRUMS

THE PRODIGY NINE-PIECE DRUM KIT

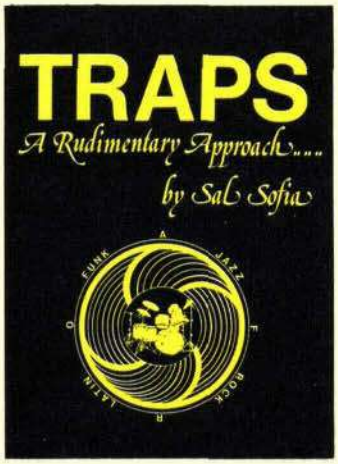
Cosmic Percussion, recently presented by Latin Percussion, Inc., has introduced the new *Prodigy* Nine-Piece Drum Kit.

CP-P9 (The *Prodigy* Nine-Piece Drum Kit) available in metallic white, wine red, silver and black, is LP's most serious drum kit yet, providing one of the most versatile kits on the market, yet priced with the budget-conscious drummer in mind.

Augmenting the traditional snare, bass drum, and tom-toms are CP's new Power Tom-Toms, outfitted with Remo heads and mounted on heavy-duty double-braced stands.

Write to: Latin Percussion/ Cosmic Percussion, 160 Belmont Avenue, Garfield, New Jersey 07026.

TRAPS: A NEW BOOK BY SAL SOFIA



After many requests for a drumset method book. Sal Sofiia—author of *The OMNI of Drum Technique*—wrote the groundwork for the modern drummer. *TRAPS: A Rudimentary Approach* offers today's innovators a modern, practical conception of the rudiments in all styles for the drumset.

Both books will be exclusively distributed world-wide for Sal Sofia by Belwin-Mills.

REMO, INC. UNVEILS NEW PRE-TUNED PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS

A series of pre-tuned "membranic" percussion instruments, which require no tuning adjustment after manufacture, has been unveiled by Remo, Inc.

The Remo *Pre-Tuned Series (PTS)* includes drumsets, bongos, tambourines, ethnic and educational percussion instruments, as well as, a line of pre-tuned drum heads.

According to Remo Belli, president of Remo, Inc., the membranic tensioning technology can be adapted to virtually any type of drum head and drum instrument.

The products introduced include three-, four- and five-piece drumsets aimed at the amateur market. The sets, which will retail from $275 to $390, include pedal, hi-hat, floor cymbal and drum stands. They will be offered in white finish only, and come with a customizing decal kit which allows a variety of decorative touches to be added.

Also unveiled were bongos with replaceable and nonreplaceable pre-tuned heads, a series of tambourines, Indian drums, Chinese drums and other educational drums.

Initially, Remo will offer the pre-tuned drum heads in the *Ambassador Coated* style in a choice of bright, mellow and dark tonal variations. Sizes offered include 12", 13", 14" and 16" batter heads, a 14" snare head and a 22" bass drum head with other sizes and types to follow.

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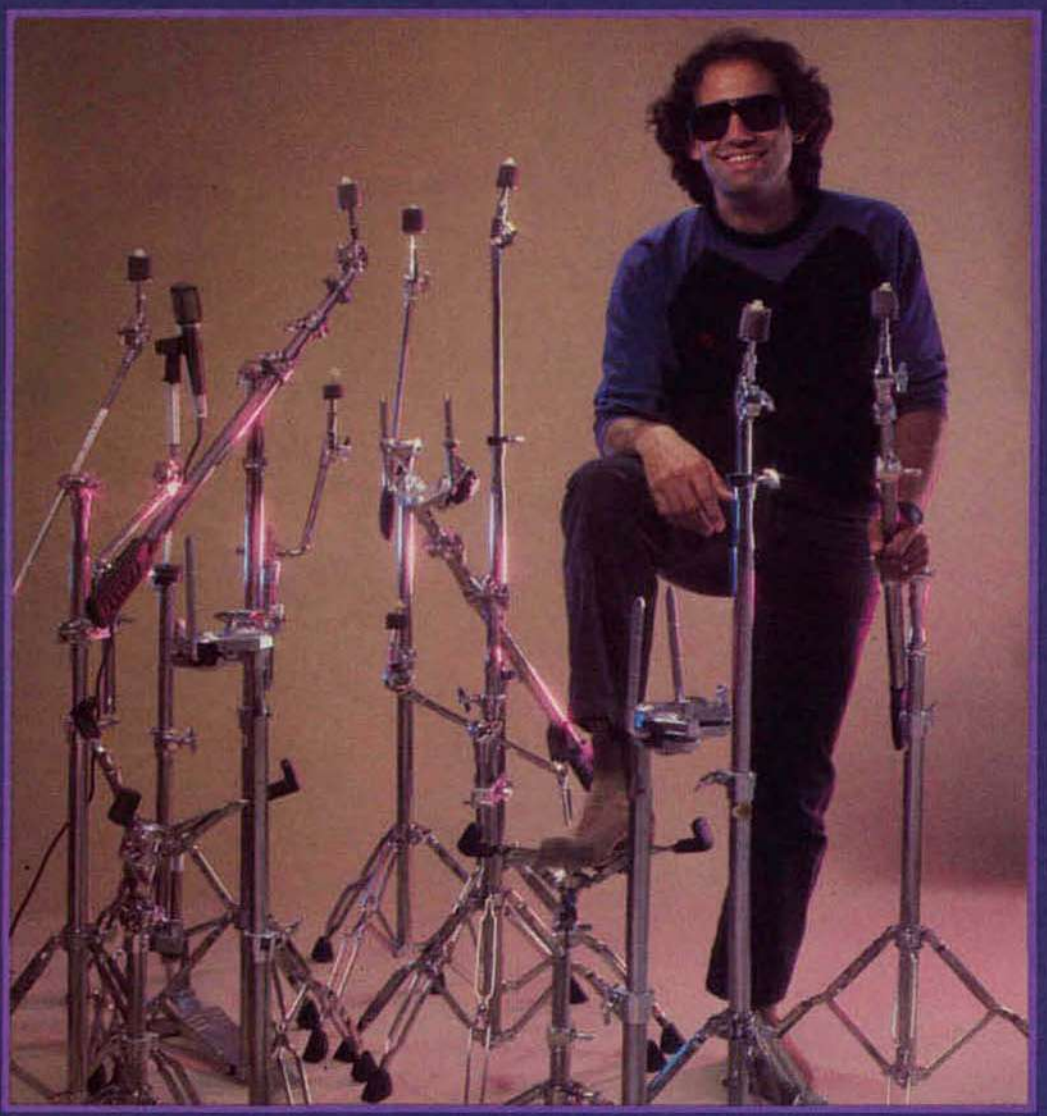
continued on page 122

Ask Liberty about the Freedom of Tama Hardware



Ask Liberty Devitto about the quality, durability and performance that he gets from his Tama hardware. He'll tell you that when it comes to ease and flexibility of set up, long lasting good looks, and the stamina to take long months on the road without giving up, there's only one way to go—TAMA! And when you're the percussion power on a rigorous Billy Joel tour, anything less than number one just won't do. See Tama hardware at your Tama dealer today.

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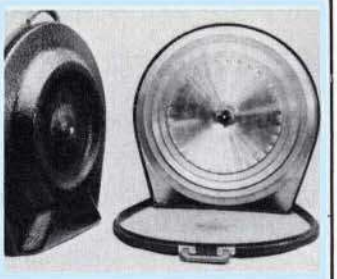
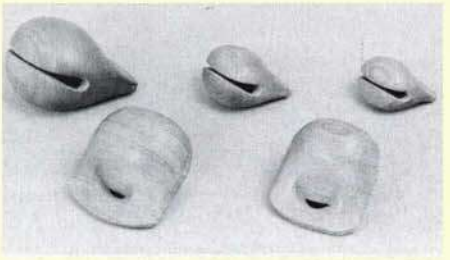
For more information see them at the Atlanta, Georgia NAMM Show at the C&R Guitar Booth #7109, or write: Cymbal Safe c/o Jamie Oldaker, 2233 E. 23 St., Tulsa, Oklahoma74114

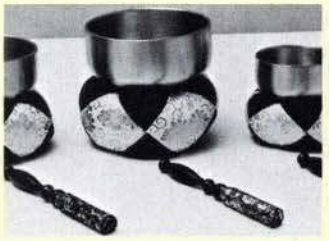


WORLD PERCUSSION, INC. INTRODUCES NEW INSTRUMENTS FROM JAPAN AND TAIWAN



Two new percussion instruments have been added to the World Percussion Inc. catalog: Japanese Temple Gongs and Solid Wood Temple Blocks.

The sustain of the Japanese Temple Gongs has been in the tradition of Japanese Buddhism for centuries. A Temple Gong set (as pictured) includes one Temple Gong, one pillow, and one mallet. Shown here are three sets, available in the U.S. in sizes 2 1/2 inches through six inches. These are played by striking the gong with the mallet, or by rubbing the wooden end of the mallet in circular motions along the gong rim.



The Solid Wood Temple Blocks come in a clear finish in sets of five blocks (pictured without stand) from 4 1/2 inches through 7 1/2 inches. They have a fine, clear tone quality that adds versatility to any percussion set up.

LP REGGAE DRUMS

Few will question the significance of the Reggae craze. It's here to stay, and everyone's dancing to the beat of the Reggae Drum.

These are carefully selected automobile brake drums, finished in charcoal gray invertex baked enamel—each selected for its musical value. No two sound alike. (Complete with mallet.) List price $39.00.

For more information: Latin Percussion, 160 Belmont Avenue, Garfield, New Jersey 07026.

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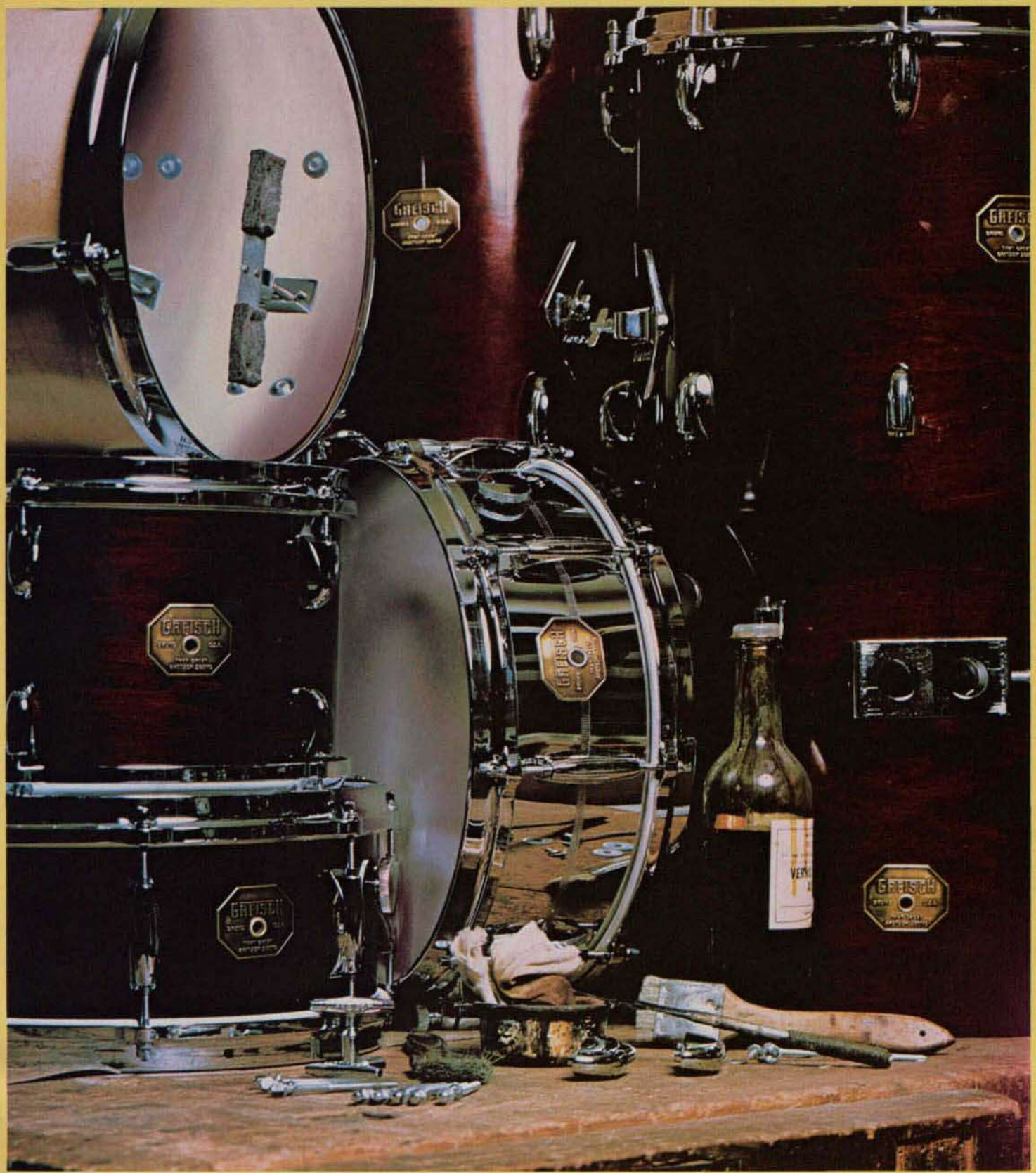

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Peter Erskine
Weather Report

You've got this polyrhythmic thing happening, using all four of your limbs constantly in a real melodic way. And as you're playing the flow, with one hand on your drum and the other on your Ride, you suddenly hear all these nice fat thick tones turn to wave after wave of pulsing light.

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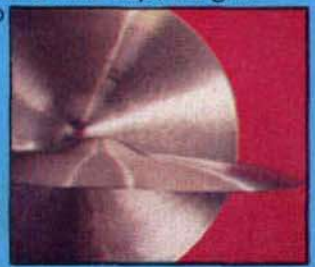

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